

Sri Rama and Krishna full of Love Supreme,
To bless the world did take a single frame,
And brought from Hea'en Love's Ganga's sacred
stream,
And bore Sri Ramakrishna's holy name.

आचण्डालाप्रतिहतरयः यस्य प्रेमप्रवाहः
लोकातीतोऽप्यहह न जहौ लोककल्याणमार्गम् ।
त्रैलोक्येऽप्यप्रतिममहिमा जानकीप्राणबन्धः
भक्त्या ज्ञानं वृतवरवपूः सीतया यो हि रामः ॥
स्तब्धीकृत्वा प्रलयकलितं वाहवोत्थं महान्तम्
हित्वा दूरं प्रकृतिसहजामन्धतामिस्रमिश्राम् ।
गीतं शान्तं मधुरमपि यः सिंहनादं जगर्ज
सोऽयं जातः प्रथितपुरुषः रामकृष्णस्त्विदानीम् ॥

PREFACE.

Thirty-four years have rolled down the stream of time, since the spirit of Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna left the mortal coil. But the wave of spirituality his life raised, has splashed the distant shores of America and Europe and is resurgent still in all its native potency in the thought-life of the different countries of the civilised world to-day. In India, his name has become a household word, a symbol of hope and a sacred mantra to conjure with. In other countries, his life-long Sadhana and unique spiritual realisations have dispelled much of the thick gloom of despondency and unbelief in matter spiritual, which were gathering through these ages of materialism and perversion. His inspired utterances have brought light where utter darkness prevailed before, solace to many a suffering soul and peace to many a distracted mind. The life which could produce such a marvellous influence within such a short period of three decades, it is needless to say, is fraught with unprecedented potency, whose full depth and significance, it will take ages to reveal before humanity.

To-day the world is in the throes of revolution

of thought-life ; the ideals are in the melting-pot ; as if a huge wave of change is sweeping over the whole of humanity. It is specially so in India. And the shining soul—the messenger of the new gospel of life, who stands upon the crest of this wave is Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna.

✓ The real quest of the soul of modern time is for the true ideal of democracy—the ideal that is truly founded on the rock of the equitable basis of life, and not the one which is based on the quick sand of human passions, and which gets its orientation from the policy of expediency and utility alone, and has no bearing to the ultimate value of life. Humanity is slowly awakening to the consciousness that the ultimate value of life and its abiding joy consist not in possession and domination—not in the realisation of the super-man of the German concept, but in the perfect freedom of soul in the Harmony of Life. And it is obvious to all who bestow any serious thought over it that such an ideal of democracy is essentially spiritual, and Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna has proved by his life and precepts that such an ideal can actually be lived on this earth, and has shown also how to do so. His message has been fundamentally a message of Spirit, of freedom and harmony ; and need we say that therein lies the real salvation of man ?

Descriptions of this wonderful life were given to the world by his various disciples and admirers from time to time in different languages, since his disappearance from the earth. But none of them embodied a detailed account of this wonderful life. Only a few years back, His Holiness Swami Saradanandaji, one of the chosen disciples of the Great Master and the present Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission, feeling the necessity of such a biography, brought out five volumes in Bengali under the title of *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Leela-prasanga* which contains many unpublished details of the life of the Master and can fairly be called an exhaustive treatment of the subject, considering the paucity of available facts of the early days of Sri Ramakrishna and of the period of his Sadhana. But the book itself has not been completed yet in Bengali. Swami Saradanandaji himself wanted to write an English version of his Bengali work, and in fact he wrote also some chapters of it, which appeared in the two periodicals of the Mission, the *Prabuddha Bharata* and the *Vedanta Kesari*. But owing to his illness and various other causes, he could not continue it. The anxiety of the general public outside Bengal to know more details of the wonderful life of the Master than what is embodied in the fragmentary dissertations of MaxMuller, Swami Vivekananda

and others on the subject was felt keenly. And we thought we would be doing some service to our eager readers, if we can present them at least with an English translation of the beautiful Bengali biography of the Master, written by Swami Saradanandaji. So we have made bold to bring out the present volume which contains the original writing of the Swamiji up to its 115th page, the rest being translations from the volume designated as *Valya-jeevana*, of his Bengali work. Our excuse for the eagerness to bring out the present volume while the original author is happily still alive among us, is in the urgent need of such a publication, and our apology in the devotion to the Great Master and in the service to his devotees.

The present volume contains the accounts of his early life till the 16th year of his age, which was wholly spent in his village home at Kamarpukur among his playmates and relations. The next volume will present the readers with the detailed description of the next twenty years of his life which were spent in the intensity of spiritual Sadhana. And subsequent volumes will embody the later period of his life depicting him as the prophet of the new dispensation.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MATH,	}	SHARVANANDA.
MYLAPORE, MADRAS,		
8th December 1920.		

LETTER OF SRIMAT SWAMI SARADANANDAJI.

I am glad you have taken up the translation of the Bengali life of the Master to satisfy the eagerness of the English-knowing general public, to learn all that is possible of that towering personality. And I wish you every success in your undertaking. I wish I could do it myself but I have not yet been permitted—and who knows whether I shall ever be in a position to do so or not?

I have gone through the forms and I am fairly satisfied with your rendering.

With blessings and best wishes,

Yours affectionately,
(Sd.) SARADANANDA.

CONTENTS.

	Page
Introduction	-28
Indian Thought on the Universal End of Religion and Philosophy	1
Yugadharma and the Great Master	12
 CHAP.—	
I Forewords and the Ancestral abode at Derypore	29
II A friend-in-Need... ..	42
III Life at Kamarpukur	47
IV Khudiram's Pilgrimage to Gaya and his Extraordinary Dream	61
V Chandra's Vision and the Birth of Gadadhar	69
VI A few words on the Unique Experiences of Gadadhar's parents	77
VII The Early Days of Gadadhar..	91
VIII In the Dawn of Youth	127
APPENDIX A	149
„ B	150
„ C	154

SRI RAMAKRISHNA, THE GREAT MASTER.

INTRODUCTION.

I

Indian Thought on the Universal End of Religion and Philosophy.

A great impetus has come in the West on the comparative study of religion and philosophy since the last decade of the Nineteenth Century. The valuable researches of the Oriental Scholars of Europe, the influence of societies which range themselves under the titles of Spiritualism and Theosophy—or of those which springing up later, claim to have found the way to rouse the dormant finer forces of the human mind and go by the names of Christian and Divine Sciences, of Metaphysical healing and so forth—the practical results, which were the natural outcome of the unique assembly of the Parliament of Religions, held at Chicago, America, in 1893—and many other things have been pointed out as reasons for the same. But

whatsoever might have helped to bring it about, the watchful reader has undoubtedly noted in it the growth and gradual development of a new tendency of the Western mind to find out, if possible, the ultimate universal end to which man is progressing through the various systems of philosophy and religion which are to be found in any country in the world.

A closer examination again, of the causes which have led the minds of the West in this new direction, has revealed the presence of a most important factor in them all. For on going to analyse and find out what contributed most to their attraction and influence, we have always been confronted with the fact that they owe the same to their acceptance of some one or more ideas from the master minds to whom India gave birth in ancient times. It can rightly be said therefore, that the present attempt of the West to search for the ultimate end of religion and philosophy, has been in a great measure due to the dominating influence of Indian thought, whether that is being always recognised or not.

Such being the case, it behoves us to inquire what India has said on the subject, in the past, and still more, to inquire what she has contributed in that line during the present age. For, that great

THE GREAT MASTER.

indeed had been her contribution to the world in the past along this line of thought, there are ample facts to prove; and for that reason, justly, the modern learned opinions of the world are unanimous in allotting to her the exalted position as the storehouse of philosophy and the motherland of religions. For is it not true, that she gave birth to a religion in the past, which still helps to illumine the lives of the majority of the human races that inhabit the globe? Is it not true, that she, through her dynamic activities in the field of religion, sent even in that dark age, her missionaries to all over the then known world,—to Thibet, China and Japan on the one side, and to Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece and the far Caucasus and Siberia on the other? And above all, is it not true, that she formulated such a perfect system of philosophy in that remote period of history, that it still holds spell-bound the master minds of the present age,—a philosophy, which helped man not only to scale the dizzy heights of reason,² but which, making itself accepted as the highest form of religion, gave him power and courage to jump across the chasm that yawns for ever between the regions of the knowable and the unknowable, and find out the solution of the mystery of his life and existence on this earth?

The great mass of India's religious literature after the Vedas and the Upanishads, have a most significant fact common to them, in the marked line of distinction that they have always drawn, between the *Sanatana* and the *Yugadharmas*—between the eternal, universal religion that ever remains the same without getting affected by the conditions of time, place and other environments, and the religion that is suited to particular periods of time, to especial social conditions and to the limited capacities of those who are to carry it out into their lives. That, indeed, points to the fact that, time there was, when India as well, had to ponder and come to her own conclusions regarding the final goal of various systems of philosophy and religion, which came into existence within her own domain. And in spite of such singular instances of experience in the lives of a few Vedic Seers, as are found expressed in the words of the Rig-Veda—'Existence is one, although sages have called it variously'*,—we find the Seers of the Upanishads holding views on the subject different from one another, and zealously promulgating the dualistic, the qualified-monistic or the monistic solution of the problem. The first serious attempt therefore, to grapple with the ques-

* एकं सद्विप्रा ब्रह्म वदन्ति । Rik. Ved. I—164.

tion, is to be found not until we come down to the age of the Uttara-Mimamsa and the Bhagavad-Gita. The sage Vyasa classified the super-conscious experiences of the Vedic sages and drew his famous aphorisms of the Vedanta Philosophy at the time, to show that those are driving at a purely monistic end; and the great author of the Bhagavad-Gita, appearing a generation after, put fresh life into the classic teachings of Vyasa by his own brilliant life and example, and proved for the first time before the world, that the duties of the daily routine of human life and the highest end of philosophy and religion, need not be at variance, that both lead to the same goal which is purely monistic in end, and that the schools of philosophy and religion which advocated dualism and qualified-monism, though they might have led some to the realisation of the absolute truth, are to be regarded generally, as hinderances in the path of perception of that truth, and are to be followed by their votaries with a certain amount of reserve and caution, remembering always that the goal in every case is pure and simple monism.

But now came a period of free thinking in philosophy, and the harmonising conclusions of Vyasa and the author of the Bhagavad-Gita, based as they were on the Vedic revelations, were not only being

questioned, but the super-conscious experiences of the Vedic sages also, were set at naught by the Buddhistic and some other schools of philosophy that sprang up at the time. Of these, the Buddhistic schools alone had considerable influence in the country, for a long time, founded as they were on the splendid life of renunciation and super-conscious realisation of Bhagavan Buddha. But with the waning of the influence of that life in time, they became stranded on the shoals of Scholasticism, as will be readily seen from the doctrines, preached by them, as regards the constant intermittency of self-consciousness in man, and the highest end of life to consist in reducing the same to utter nothingness !

The great genius of Bhagavan Sankara was needed at the time to drag India out of the dangers of such scholasticism. And he did the same by bringing her back to the revelations of the Vedas and the Upanishads, and showing her clearly that the variance in the super-conscious experiences of the Vedic sages is but superficial, and that in spite of the same, there is to be found in them a gradual growth of thought culminating in pure monism. As an evidence of the same, he pointed out the fact that the sages who attained the highest plane of super-consciousness, had invariably the same kind of experiences and expressed them always in almost

identical language; and so the attainment of that monistic truth must be the end of every system of religion and philosophy. It is clear therefore that Sankara brought the solution of the problem, we have been discussing, nearer to its final conclusion than what was done before his time; and according to him, the essence of the *Sanatana* or Eternal religion is to be defined as the attainment of that stage of super-consciousness, where the dual vision in us ceases entirely by the help of the *Nirvikalpa-Samadhi* or perfect concentration.

The ancient Masters in India have always recognised various stages or planes of super-consciousness, attainable by the devotee through different degrees of intensity in the concentration of his mind, as will be readily seen by going through the aphorisms of the sage Patanjali, the great authority on the subject. And the attainment of the highest of those planes through perfect or most intense concentration, consists in gaining within one's own self, the glorious vision of unity or *Adwaita* which forms the core of the eternal and universal religion.

But the question arises, why should the attainment of that stage of super-consciousness be regarded as the ultimate end of all religions? The answer which India can readily offer to it is, because the

devotees of even the most dualistic religions have been seen to come in time, to the attainment of that stage of super-consciousness by proceeding along their own path of devotion and worship. The Buddhist, the Christian, the Mahommedan and the votaries of every other great religion on earth, have come to that. Else how do we account for Buddha's experience of his individual self getting merged in the *Prajna-paramita* or the infinite intelligence,—or that of Christ, as 'I and my Father are one',—or of the experience of some of the Mahommedan sages, as '*Anal-hak*',—'the Deity is my own self,?' Religion has ever been regarded by the Indian masters as intensely practical, and a sincere practice of it, has always led man ultimately to this self-same experience. India, of all countries on earth, has recognised this from very old times, and as an evidence of that, we find that the Vedic commentator Yaska noticed and laid down the fact that, 'the attainment of the highest plane of super-consciousness is not always confined to the votaries of Aryan religion alone, but instances of the same are to be found sometimes among those professing the non-Aryan religions even.'

The attainment of the highest stage of super-consciousness has been held in India to be not only the end of religion, but in it, has also been found

the goal to which philosophy is driving man through all her various systems. Philosophy, according to the old masters in India, can never be considered as separate from religion, and the attempt to do so would in their opinion, end in leading the human mind to an atrophy of reason and utter confusion of understanding in regard to the mysteries of life and existence, and the origin of the creation.

Such in short, is the solution of the problem which India advanced down to the time of Sankara. But it did not go without a contradiction, especially from the qualified monistic school of Ramanuja and other teachers, who flourished later, and who based their philosophy on a different interpretation of the self-same revelations of the Vedic Sages on which Sankara had based his own monistic school. And in time, the practice of offering different interpretations to the super-conscious experiences of the Vedic sages, to support one's own school of philosophy, became the fashion of the day; and the dualistic schools of thought also produced their own, like the rest, in support of themselves. It must be told, however, to the credit of the teachers of the qualified-monistic school, especially of Ramanuja, that they advanced the highest possible solution of the relation of the Brahman with the human soul and the universe, that can ever be given by human reason

without its attaining the highest stage of super-consciousness, viewing the latter two as forming inseparable parts of the Universal, the Brahman. It must be said nevertheless, that the history of philosophy in India from the age of Sankara down to the end of the eighteenth century, is full of minute records of, not unoften, far-fetched interpretations of the experiences of the Vedic seers, which rendered the question of finding the end of religion and philosophy more than ever, hopeless during the time.

The advent of the nineteenth century brought in its wake, quite a new state of things, in the realms of religion and philosophy in the country. With the birth of a Seer of thought of the first order, the inter-penetrating power and magnitude of whose living realisations are, as it were, the culmination of the chain of super-conscious experiences, beginning from the Vedic age down to our own times, of all the sages and the masters that were born in the country,—she has become able, not only to hold her own against the rapid encroachments of the tidal wave of materialism that visited her shores from the far West, but to send all over the world the mighty proclamation that her vigils of the past in searching after the universal end of religion and philosophy, have at last been crowned with success ; —that dualism, qualified-monism and monism are

each in itself true, as successive stages on the way to the realisation of that great goal,—that philosophy and religion lead men always from truth to truth, from lower to higher and the highest truth,—and that all the different forms of religion that exist or will ever come to exist in the world, are and will be, every one of them, true, in the sense that each one of them does and will represent a path leading to that ultimate goal.

Reader ! we shall make bold to relate to you , as best as we can, the account of this wonderful life of super-conscious realisations, in spite of the trepidations that we feel in our heart, considering the stupendous task before us and our own shortcomings. For such indeed, are the lives of the Great Masters that they have always drawn the worshipful reverence of the people of all ages and climes ; and of such, has it been told in the Bhagavad-Gita, that they come to fulfil the universal necessity of the age in which they are born. And have not the demands of the present age of unbounded scepticism and materialism, in the field of religion, all over the world, pointed clearly to the necessity of the advent of such a Master ?

II.

Yugadharma and the Great Master.

Before proceeding to deal with the life of the Master, it is necessary to tell the reader a few more words about *Yugadharma*, about its relation to the *Sanatana Dharma* and to those whom India has regarded as the great masters or teachers in the field of religion. We have already stated that the forms of religion which a people is found to profess at different periods of its existence to meet the demands of higher stages of progress, attained by it through the process of evolution, have been designated in India from very early times as *Yugadharms*. It is clear therefore, that such forms of religion can never remain the same, but must always be changing. They must change as the physical and mental capacities of the units composing a people, become gradually unfolded, and leading them to attain higher stages of development, bring forth different conditions in social, moral and spiritual fields. For they become empowered then, as it were, to have glimpses of

reality in relation to the present and the beyond, from different and higher angles of vision, and struggle to express and adjust everything in life in accordance with those, and thus new forms of religion are being evolved out of the old ones which they used to profess before.

Human consciousness exists always in a graded plane, said a great philosopher of the West, so that the visions of reality that we get from one point of it, can never coincide with those that we receive from its other points. The same may be told with equal accuracy of the consciousness of a people. For is it not made up entirely of the sum total of consciousness of the individuals comprising that people? Therefore, whatsoever is found to be true for the former, will equally be found to be true for the latter also. Such being the case, the religious consciousness of a people is bound to be in the same way and to rise likewise through the process of evolution, to higher and higher visions of the truth beyond; and its visions of one plane will never be exactly what they are in the other planes; and the forms through which that consciousness will naturally come to express those higher visions of the truth during its upward journey, will be the *Yugadharmas*; and through many such will it progress to realise at last the

absolute truth of the *Sanatana* or Eternal religion. Therefore, from the standpoint of the people or a collection of individuals, the *Yugadharmas* can well be looked upon, as stages through which the religious consciousness of a people rises to the attainment of the absolute truth, resting in each of them for a while for gathering strength for another forward move and fresh climb towards the goal. And from the standpoint of the individual, they can be described as the concrete aspects of religion which the human mind gets, before reaching to the abstract and absolute aspects of the same. For, here in the field of spirituality also, the procedure of men's mind has always been along the same line as in other branches of human knowledge, namely, from the concrete to the abstract, and from that ultimately to the beyond. The *Yugadharmas* however, must fulfil some more conditions according to Indian scriptures, as we shall see presently.

The past history of the world gives ample evidence to the fact that the *Samskaras* or ideas that guided a people's thoughts and actions in old times, had been changing all along until they have come up to what they are at present; and that even now, they are going through the same process; that the laws that governed a people of yore, had to be changed many a time, on account of the

changes that came from time to time, with regard to that people's ideas on the social, the moral and the religious fields ; and that, what were regarded by that people as virtue in former times, have come to be looked upon later, in many instances, as vices. The horse and bull sacrifices of the Vedic times, the custom in old times in India, of living with one's husband's brother until the birth of a child, when there had been no issue of the marriage on account of the husband's becoming disabled through disease or otherwise, the custom in Europe in the past, of the newly-wedded bride of a serf, to share the same bed with the liegelord of her husband for a day, before she could live with him, which used to go by the name of the law of Marquoit, and many other old customs of Asia and Europe, may be cited as examples of the same. They go to show that different *samskaras* or ideas have controlled and guided men's conduct in different ages, and the growth of the individual as well as of the people have always been seen to have followed the same path, howsoever slowly they might have moved towards progress and enlightenment. And what is true of one people in the face of the earth is true of every other. For nature works uniformly through them all, in spite of the differences that come to our notice when we go to compare them, one

with the other. And the variety between them with respect to growth and development, can clearly be accounted for, by considering the fact that all of them have not yet reached the same plane through the process of evolution.

But in spite of such slow growth of the individual and the people, as history gives evidence of, none can deny the fact that all the ethical codes that hold us spell-bound to-day, and all the great religions which the world has seen up to the present, had been given birth to by the peoples and societies of old. And that in spite of all imperfections in them, they produced teachers of spirituality who realised the highest truth in the field of religion, not only for themselves, but discovered ways untraversed by men before, and led others to attain to the direct realisation of that truth;—men, whose lives had been as beacon lights to guide the weary steps of their fellow beings in the dark, and whose loving words had and still have power to capture the hearts of the masses, though they had been first uttered ages and ages ago.

India had the good fortune of producing many such teachers from time immemorial, aye, even from the Vedic ages. Owing to that fact, and guided by the influence of those great lives, she decided of old, to build the life of her people on a spiritual basis.

She was content at first to call them by the general designation of 'Rishi' or Seers of things transcending the senses. But as time rolled on and the appearance of such teachers became frequent in her, she began to ponder over their lives and compare their super-sensuous experiences and came to her own conclusions regarding them. It was then, that she discovered the purpose which these teachers serve in the plan of the universe, their relation to their fellow-beings, the time when the world can surely expect their advent and many other facts relating to them. It was then, that she could classify them into the various orders of the *Jivan-muktas* or those who had been in bondage before but have become free in this life by realising the highest truth for themselves,—the *nityamuktas* or those who had never been in bondage but have accepted the same willingly, for a short time to show others the method of how to realise the truth by following the paths prescribed in the Scriptures,—the *Avataras* or the great masters who on account of the great spiritual power they manifest in life by discovering new ways to the realisation of the highest super-conscious truth and persuading masses of their fellow beings to walk in them, are looked upon as direct incarnations of Isvara, the Ruler and Controller of the universe in whom we live.

move and have our being. It is interesting to note the development of the idea of the avatara or God-incarnation through the whole range of the Hindu Scriptures. In the Vedas and the Upanishads we come across the idea of monotheism or of one God creating and ruling over the universe. Moreover there are revelations of such ideas also that He in His infinite grace and mercy makes the pure among men see things transcending the senses and the intellect of ordinary mortals, and the idea too that the spiritual preceptor should be revered and worshipped as a special manifestation of the Deity inasmuch as the spiritual power in Him in its essence could come directly from the Deity alone. But nowhere do we find in them the idea that the creator immanent in the universe incarnates Himself in special human forms for the purpose of bringing enlightenment to the human kind. It stands to reason however that the fact of attaining the state of super-consciousness in which alone is possible all religious realisation, was established in India even at that early period. And that it was really so, can be gathered from the fact that the great philosopher of India, Kapila, who probably appeared at the end of the Vedic times really disbelieved and refuted the personal idea of the Deity, but could not do the same with regard to the existence of that

higher state of consciousness. Thus it will be found that Kapila denied the existence of a personal God ruling over the universe at all times, and attempted to establish the idea that some there are among men who when about to reach perfect liberation, feel a strong desire in them to do good to their fellow-beings, which finally hinders them from attaining to their real Selfhood—the state of the unconditioned *Purusha*; and that getting identified with *Prakriti* or the creative principle, they come to feel themselves as all-powerful, and as rulers of the universe for sometime. And these souls are, according to Kapila, the rulers of the universe. And the one amongst them who is nearest to liberation becomes thus the God of the Universe for a *Kalpa* or cycle of time. He then gets perfectly liberated and the turn comes for another to take his place. Thus the idea of a personal controller of the universe has been admitted by Kapila, though he dispensed with the idea of a personal creator of it.

It is easy to see from what has been stated above that the sage Kapila, in spite of his denying the idea of the existence of a personal Deity helped none the less to develop the idea of *Avatara* or God-incarnation. For, while it was easy for an atheist to keep to the fine line of demarcation that

he drew between the idea of the personal Deity and the idea of Super-men ruling over the universe, one after another, it was not so for those who entertained devoutly the idea of a personal God. The chances were that such people would unite their ideas of the Deity with the idea of the super-man-ruler of Kapila, and that the idea of God-incarnation would follow next as the necessary conclusion.

After Kapila, came the highest flight of India in the region of philosophy in the Vedanta. With it was introduced a perfect reconciliation between the personal and the impersonal ideas of the Deity. For, it taught people to look to the various personal aspects of God which they had been entertaining as limited views of His real nature which is impersonal, and that the highest personal view of Him that man can have, is in conceiving Him as the sum total of all individual souls and all nature, sentient and insentient, as expressed in the second sutra of the Vedanta philosophy जन्माद्यस्य यतः—the One in and from whom is the birth, the stay and the dissolution of the universe.

The idea of the super-man-ruler of Kapila also, was taken up by the Vedanta with a certain reserve. For, while advocating the idea that all powers come to the liberated, it reserved the

powers of creating and dissolving the universe for the Supreme Ruler, the personal and impersonal Deity,—Whom it preached. And for the liberated, who through strong compassion in them felt deeply for the liberation of his fellow-beings, it stated that they willingly keep themselves engaged in the task for a few incarnations even after liberation. Such beings are designated by it as *Adhikarikas* or liberated men born of their own will with certain missions to carry out in their lives, for the good of the world.

Again, going to solve the riddle of all ages, the Gordian knot of philosophy, in its attempt to explain the purpose of the Lord in creating the world, it came out with its famous answer that the universe is produced by the play of the Infinite with Himself—in the aphorism

— and that the perfect and infinite Lord can have no other purpose in view in doing so. But from the human stand-point, it stated in unison with Kapila, the distinct purpose of creation to be the attainment of liberation or perfection by the human kind, through realisation of the highest super-conscious state.

Thus the Vedanta, though it did not enter into the discussion of the details of it, supported the idea of God-incarnation, leaving it to others to

get it developed and settled in all its details, later. And it did not take long for those others to come to the task. For, now came the age of the Smritis and the Puranas, and the authors of them took up the subject vigorously in their hands and developed the idea of *avatara* or God-incarnation as we find it to be in vogue in the present times. The age of the Puranas was an age of popularising the Vedantic doctrines of religion, and it was soon found out by the leaders of the age that nothing held captive the popular imagination better than the idea that the impersonal Lord, the One, undivided Ocean of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss, Who manifests Himself as the Universe, in His innate compassion for the human kind, becomes not only the personal God, but is born again and again of his own will among them, not through bondage of Karma but for the sole purpose of carrying liberation to their very doors. Thus the order of men who were known formerly as *adhikarikas* and believed to be born with the mission of discovering new paths to super-consciousness, came to be looked upon henceforth as the direct incarnations of the Deity. The old Vedic idea of worshipping the spiritual preceptor, then supplying its own quota to this new development of thought, brought the idea of God-incarnation to its present state of

completion. Even Buddhism, which flourished later had to take up this key-note in order to popularise the laws laid down by its founder. For, in the *Lalita Vistara* we find, the Lord Buddha described as descending of His own will from the highest heaven, the Tushitapur, amongst the weary travellers of this waste of the world, to bring comfort and consolation by showing them the way out of the same. And He did so, they said, on account of His unbounded compassion for them. And Sankara, the great and gifted preacher of the Vedantic doctrines who appeared in the wake of the downfall of Buddhism, and to whom is attributed justly the origin of the form of Vedic religion current in India even up to the present day, defended the idea of *avatara* or God-incarnation in his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita. He said therein that the Lord though impersonal in nature, appears to us sometimes as if born of human parents and possessed of a human body and mind, as He did in the case of Sri Krishna, to formulate and establish new ways leading to super-consciousness, and He does so when he finds it necessary to fulfil an universal demand of an age.

Such in short, may be regarded as the history of the origin and development of the idea of *avatara*

or God-incarnation in the Hindu scriptures. It is necessary for the present, to make the reader familiar with its details, so as to enable him to judge and decide for himself the question of who should be regarded as such in the field of spirituality. And nowhere indeed, do we find the problem so ably handled as by Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita and by Vyasa in his Purana, entitled the Srimad-Bhagavatam.*

A short summary, therefore, of the same will serve our purpose sufficiently here. But before entering into it, we want to impress upon the mind of the reader what we have just seen to be the most significant features by which a *Yuga-dharma* should be distinguished ; namely, first, that it should come to fulfil a persistent and universal spiritual demand of the age in which it is discovered and promulgated ; and, secondly, that its powers to make one realise the highest state of super-consciousness when followed with intense devotion and sincerity should be demonstrated before the people of that age by a master-mind by carrying it out

* Though the present form of this Purana is ascribed by many to the genius of the great scholar Bopa-Devā, the famous author of the Grammer "*Mugdha-Bodha*," yet the current belief is that he was not the author of it but simply produced it out of his memory when not a single volume of this Purana of Vyasa could be found in the country.

practically in his own life in such a way as to have not the least shade of a doubt regarding the same. These are the claims which a *Yuga-dharma* must always fulfil along with those which we have mentioned ere long in the present discourse, before it can establish itself in the fold of religion and be accepted by the people as a way to perfect enlightenment. It is necessary to remember the above, otherwise, any ill-conceived and impracticable theory advanced by any man in the field of religion will be mistaken for a *Yuga-dharma*. Therefore *Yuga-dharmas* can be defined as ways discovered by masterminds in the field of religion from time to time, to lead people with particular tendencies produced by different groups of *Samaskaras* in them, to the highest stage of super-consciousness.

We proceed now to consider briefly, the qualities, which according to the Hindu Scriptures, have always been found in the master-minds that gave birth to *Yuga-dharmas* in the past, in the religious History of India. The *first* and foremost of these is that they are born free. The endless struggle and hardship which they undergo to discover the hitherto unknown path to super-consciousness are prompted to them always by their desire to enrich the lives of their fellow-beings, and not from any selfish motive whatsoever.

Indeed every action in their lives proceeds from such a motive.

Secondly, they are born endowed with perfect memory. This enables them to remember their former births and the deeds which they accomplished in those. It helps them besides to remember always the utterly transitory nature of human life and its enjoyments and makes them run to the goal as fast as possible. And by means of this power they are able moreover, to compare the present with the past and find out the direction along which the development of people's minds has proceeded hitherto and the means which would help them to grow and reach the goal quickly in future.

Thirdly, they are the discoverers of new paths in the field of religion.

Fourthly, they are able to transmit knowledge to their fellow-beings simply by touching them or even by their will-power

Fifthly, they are able to perceive clearly the *Samskaras* or tendencies produced by past *Karmas* of their fellow-beings at the very first sight, although they are never eager to make a show of that power to others ; and that helps them to know instantly what would help each one of them to reach easily the highest stage of superconsciousness. Thus they are the born spiritual guides of the human kind.

And, *lastly*, they are conscious of their mission all through their lives.

Such, in brief, are the elements which go to make the *Avataras* or God-incarnations, and they alone are looked upon in India as the Great Masters in the field of religion. And when "religion goes down and irreligion prevails" on the face of the earth, when blinded by the false glamour of the vanities of the world people come to look upon the creature comforts of this "two days'" existence as the be-all and the end-all of human life, and when losing belief in God, the soul and the future-existence, they are led away from their real nature, the blissful state of the unconditioned Reality, to grope in the dark in endless misery by false teachers and prophets, then and then alone is the time to look out for the advent of such Great Masters. The religious history of the world bears testimony to the fact that it has really been so in the past—that a Krishna, a Buddha, and a Jesus were born in such times as the fulfilment of the demands of those ages. And the Scriptures of India make the bold proclamation before the world that it will ever be so in future. For such is the law that regulates the world of spirit that governs the mundane affairs of this material universe. The Srimad-Bhagavatam

has given the account of more than a score of such Great Masters who were born in India at different ages ; and has ended by saying that many such will be born again in future as necessity arises.

And has the life of the Master of whom we are going to give an account here, fulfilled those conditions ? Has He discovered a new path to the highest super-consciousness and demonstrated that in his own life in the aforesaid way ? Was He conscious of His mission all through His life—and did He fulfil the universal demand of the present time ?—Reader, listen, and decide then for yourself.

CHAPTER I.

Forewords and the ancestral abode at Dereypore.

The student of Indian History is familiar with the fact, how during each transition period of the country, spiritual teachers of great importance have arisen and guided the people to save their national inheritance, "the spiritual basis of collective life and conduct," on which they had been established from very early times by their Scriptures, the Vedas. The advent of Sri Krishna during a time when the dominant Kshatriya or military power of the country tried to subvert that basis by controlling the spiritual power exerted by the Brahmin teachers,—the birth of Buddha at a time when the spirituality of the Brahmin teachers had degenerated into mere elaborate observance of external sacrifices, rites and ceremonies,—the appearance of Sankara during the downfall of Buddhism—all these are notable instances of the aforesaid fact, which the tradition of the country holds before the gaze of the enquiring reader.

Coming down to periods where History illumines the path of the enquirer and he feels himself on more solid ground, we find no less display of that curious fact ; Ramanuja, the great teacher of Qualified Monism, appeared in 1150 A.D.—a period during which the mighty Moslem power had first entered the country and was struggling to establish itself there as a permanent factor. In the North, again, arose the great Guru Nanak and Sri Chaitanya, both of whom were contemporaries of Babar, the great Mogul who established himself on the throne of Delhi by winning the first battle of Panipat in 1526 A.D. against the Afghan Lodies and started a line of his own which for a period of about two and a half centuries ruled over the destiny of almost the whole of India.

Such are the facts that reveal themselves during the time when India was overrun by the Mohammedans and indeed those were times when the country passed through great transitions. For, India at the time became gradually conscious of the fact that the Mohammedan element had come to remain in the land, and that through peace and adversity, through friendship and enmity, was going to influence the habits, the character, the language and the literature, nay even the religious ideas of her people at large. She found out, moreover, that

the gradual process of Aryanisation through which the vedic religion was fusing together in one homogeneous whole, the various races and creeds that had come to dwell in her in long past ages, had met with a check before that new ruling power; and that she would have not only to find out and adapt the way of assimilating the same, but to adjust herself in such a way that she could do so and also preserve the hallowed ideals for which she had striven so long. Such were some of the problems during the Mohammedan occupation of the land, which its religious reformers had to solve for the benefit of the people, and that the country had been guided aright during those troublous times, we gather from the fact of the toning down of the fierce fanaticism of the first Islamic invaders, in Babar and his successors.

But India was destined to pass through a much greater transition in later times when the great Empire of the Moguls fell into pieces after the third battle of Panipat in 1761 A.D., and the rule of the country gradually slipped into the hands of the British. For, at this time came the avalanche of the materialistic ideas and principles of life which were so foreign to the land, and it looked for a time, as if the very foundation of the collective spiritual life of the people was going to be undermined and destroyed by them. Never in the history of India

did the prospect of such a ruin overshadow her people as during the time when it was decided by her British rulers that her people should have to receive the benefits of the Western methods of education through the medium of the English language. Whatever might be urged in praise of that great reform introduced into the country during the government of Lord W. C. Bentinck (1828-1836 A.D.)—and we are not slow to appreciate the great merit, of the same—it must also be told of it, on the other hand, that it did somehow spread a sort of baneful hypnotising influence over the people of the land. For, within a very short time after its introduction, we find, as a result, that the majority of the people thus educated, lost all faith in their former religious beliefs and institutions, and strove to mould everything Indian after the Western model.

None can say how far the country would have proceeded along this line of self destruction by imitating Western methods without the attempt to assimilate them, had it not been for the strong check that it received from an opposite power coming from an un-recognised and unlooked for quarter namely, the seemingly dead bones of the religion of the country.

And the opposition set up by it, came not as ordinarily in the shape of protest and condemnation but in the positive, direct and the stronger way of the building of an ideal life entirely according to the old Indian methods without any help whatsoever from what the West could offer, and the patient, silent living of that life before the eyes of the people, to let them have the opportunity of realising for themselves the utility and the practicality of the old time-hallowed methods.

Thus, during the greatest of all her transition periods, India has been saved again as in former times, by the birth of a Seer of the first order, and it is curious to note that he was born in the self-same year, namely, the year 1836 A.D., in which Lord Bentinck retired from the field completing his various benign reforms including the one on the education of Indian youths, and leaving Sir Charles Metcalf in his place to carry out the same. But strange as has been the coincidence of the time of the organised introduction of English education on the land with its hypnotic influence on the people and the advent of one whose life has been predestined, as it were, to oppose the evil influences of the former, it came none the less in the course of fulfilment of the promise of Sri Krishna to the people in the Bhagavat Gita, that they should be blessed

with guides like his ownself whensoever necessity would arise for the same as we shall see presently from the record of events of this wonderful life.

About the time when the British power had established itself permanently in Bengal and was trying to introduce its own administration into the land under the guidance of its first Governors-in-General Lord Clive and Warren Hastings that a Brahmin family belonging to the middle class in 'Hindu Society, had been living in the village of Dereypore, situated a little to the east of the place where the extreme western portion of the Hoogly district juts into the adjoining districts of Midnapore and Bankura. The "Chatterjee" family was living there for several generations past and was regarded highly by the people of the village on account of the truthfulness, charity and staunch religious principles of its members. Manik Ram the head of the family at the time was living in comparative opulence on his income from the fifty acres of cultivated fields which he had inherited from his ancestors. The rumours of the defeat of Serajuddaulah, the Nawab of Bengal in the battle of Plassey in 1757 and the transfer of the Dewani of the province to British hands in 1759, must have reached the village when Manik Ram was quite young. But the incident of the terrible famine that devastated Bengal in 1770,

must have left a deep and harrowing impression upon his memory, for he was about twenty years old at the time and had a direct knowledge of the sufferings of his neighbours and of his own family on account of it. But then, of the compulsory abdication of the treacherous Nawab Mir Jaffer and the accession of his son-in-law to the throne of Murshidabad, the fall of Mir Kassim in the battle of Buxar in 1764 A.D., the depredations of the Bhonsla family of the Marhattas of Nagpore and the defeat which the Marhatta power had suffered on the field of Panipat in 1761 A.D.—and of all such events of the time, which had helped to change considerably the destiny of India, Manik Ram and his neighbours were perhaps perfectly ignorant. For, sovereigns came and sovereigns went,—the rulership of the country changed hands a hundred times from ages immemorial, but the mild, industrious, home-loving and obedient rural people of the Bengal villages thought always that they had nothing to do with such big concerns and remained occupied in their blissful innocence with their own peaceful pursuits and religious observances.

Be that as it may, Manik Ram must have married as was customary with his people, sometime after he had passed his teens and become

gradually the father of three sons and a daughter, of whom the eldest was born probably in 1775 A.D., about five years after the terrible famine. The family following the Vaishnava cult worshipped Sri Ramachandra as its tutelary God from a long time, so Manick Ram named all his children after that Deity. Thus the eldest born was named Khudi Rama or 'the little Rama', the daughter who came next was called Ramseela or 'devoted to Rama' and the two sons who followed, were named Nidhi Ram and Ram Kanai respectively.

The children of Manik Ram were all brought up in accordance with the best traditions of a Brahmin family. They received their initiation in the three R's in the village *pathasala* and were sent then to the neighbouring *chatuspathis* or *Toles* to receive a knowledge of Sanskrit grammar, literature, Puranas, Smritis or codes of Hindu laws and customs, with perhaps a little of astronomy and astrology. The eldest of them, Khudi Ram, with whom we are most concerned here in this narrative, got married after finishing his education at about the age of twenty four. His sister Ramseela must have been married long before that event;—for, as the reader knows, Hindu girls are generally betrothed at a very early age, though they continue to live with their parents until they come of age. So

Ramseela was married at an early age to Bhagbat Banerjee of a well-to-do family of the village Selampur in the District of Midnapore.

Khudi Ram became the head of the family in course of time on the decease of his father and was held in great respect by his neighbours on account of his piety, uprightness, charity and strength of character. It is said that he had made pilgrimages even in that age (when there was no rail-road in the country) to Ayodhya and Brindavana, but of that we are not quite certain. It is true nevertheless, that he had a very great devotion for his family deity Bhagavan Ramachandra, and never in his life tasted food until after performing his daily worship of Him. He used to manage the affairs of the family with the help of his two younger brothers who also got married in time and every thing went on peacefully as it did during the time of his father.

It is a blessing to win the affections of a noble woman in this world, so Khudi Ram must have felt himself more than happy at this period of his life. For, Chandramoni, or Chandra,—as she was called generally by her friends and acquaintances, the wife of Khudi Ram, was indeed a noble woman. Loving and dutiful she had the knack of forgetting herself entirely in the joy of helping others even from her

tender youth. Thus she had endeared herself not only to her husband's family but was loved by all who came across her path. To crown the happiness of the family she became the mother of a boy about the year 1805 A. D. and it made her feel henceforth as if she was the mother of all the children of the neighbourhood. The happy mother called her first born by the name of Ram Kumar or the 'child Rama.'

Little as were the wants of this Brahmin family, those had been met more than sufficiently by their income from the produce of their fields. Thus they could not only afford to advance hospitality to their neighbours on festive occasions and help the stranger and the poor at all times by supplying them with food and shelter for a few days, but were able to lay by something for their own use at all future contingencies, as for instance the days of drought and scarcity. Thus time rolled on for several years more in peace and plenty, and the even flow of their lives was seldom broken except on occasions of the addition of new members to the family from time to time, in the event of a boy or a girl born, or the celebration of a marriage or of some religious observances.

Chandra became the mother again of a girl about the year 1810 and named her Katyayani ;

and Ramseela, the sister of Khudi Ram who had become the mother in turn of a boy and a girl some time ago and named them Ramchand and Heman-gini, respectively—gave the latter in marriage to Krishnachandra Mukherji of the village of Sihar, a place situated a few miles to the north-west of Dereypore. It is said that Khudi Ram was very fond of this girl and so her marriage was celebrated at her uncles' home at Derey instead of at her paternal residence at Selampore, as it ought to have been.

The brightest day has its night, and the most peaceful life its dark days of adversity. The cloud that hurled the thunderbolt and brought ruin to Khudi Ram's peaceful days, arose now in an unlooked for quarter of the horizon in about the year 1813 in the shape of a request from the landlord of the place, who had his abode in the adjoining village of Satheria. This Zemindar was a most unscrupulous man who had never stopped from gaining his ends by fair means or foul. And woe to the tenant who roused his ire for just or unjust reasons; he would then get himself embroiled in endless troubles and lawsuits and in a short while find himself dispossessed of everything that he had and ousted from the village in utter helplessness. Such a man was Ramananda Roy, and numerous were the

stories that people whispered in their fear to one another about his dark deeds. The man died without leaving any issue and the people in their relief saw the hand of God in it, but that came long afterwards. Ramananda out of an old grudge picked up a quarrel now with a neighbour of Khudi Ram and in order to secure his condemnation in the suit that he got up against him, invited Khudi Ram to give false evidence on his own side. Khudi Ram met his proposal with intense disdain with the result that he also was unfairly implicated in a protracted law suit within a short time. Ramananda Roy won the suit in the end and honest Khudi Ram after meeting the expenses of the same found himself, at about his fortieth year, dispossessed of every vestige of property—even his ancestral house and fields ! In their utter ruin the members of the Chatterjee family must have held a hurried council and it was decided that they should disband themselves and depart for ever from the village which knew them long, to keep themselves away from further revenge of the wicked Ramananda. Bitter indeed was the parting day when the two younger brothers left Dereypore to live with their respective fathers-in-law, and Khudi Ram and his devoted wife bade adieu to their ancestral abode and with their young boy and girl, turned their

reluctant steps eastward to a different village at the invitation of a kind friend. All that were left behind now to tell to future generations of the sad story of the Chatterjees, were the temple of Siva and the big tank adjoining it—and they are known even to this day as the temple and the tank belonging to the Chatterjee family.

CHATER II.

A Friend in Need.

About three miles to the east of Dereypore, there stands a cluster of villages, known even to this day as Sripur, Kamarpukur and Mukandapur. The three lie in such close proximity to one another that for all practical purposes they may be regarded as one and are referred to generally by the name of Kamarpukur by the people of the surrounding neighbourhood. They cover an area of about four square miles and are on the latitude $87^{\circ}-42'$ with a longitude of about $22^{\circ}-54'$. They stand at the crossing of four roads which lead to Burdwan about thirty miles to the north, to Arambagh about twelve miles to the east, to Midnapore and Puri on the south and to Raniganj on the west. The roads must have been made during the Pathan and Moghul rule of Bengal for military purposes—at least some of them. The big tanks or *dighis* at regular intervals, the ruins of a structure for keeping elephants, the battlefield of Mogulmari, the ruins of the old fort of Mandaron and the triumphal

gateway with Persian inscriptions on it a few miles to the west of the same, bear witness to the fact.

Kamarpukur must have known better days and had a bigger population in old times than it has at present. The vast ruins of brick-built houses, temples and wall-enclosures that greet the eye of the traveller at every step in the village attest to the fact. The facility of communication with Burdwan, Midnapore and Calcutta on account of the well-built roads helped the place to carry on formerly a brisk local trade. Thus instead of being entirely a rural village, it supported a good number of artisans, traders and mechanics in former times. One can find signs of the same in the declining local industries of hookah-pipes made of ebony, Dhutis and napkins etc., with which its people carry on trade even to this day with Calcutta and other remote parts of the country. The place had its regular fair twice a week from days primeval, when the people of the surrounding villages assembled in it to buy or sell food-grains, vegetables, clothes, medicines, ropes, mats, wicker baskets and all sorts of necessary household articles. The 'hat' or fair is still held on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

The presence of numerous temples dedicated to Siva and Vishnu, bears testimony to the religious tendency of the people. Temples dedicated to

Dharma or Buddha also are not rare, though the name has lost its former significance and the god is being looked upon by the people at present as one of the many incarnations of Vishnu. Less than a generation ago the car festival in honour of the god was usually celebrated in the village with great eclat. And the villagers still tell you the story how the wheels of the big car got stuck into the deep ruts of a muddy road and it capsized and broke on such an occasion, how the broken parts were then destroyed by the white ants in an incredibly short space of time and finally how the people looked upon it as the will of the god Dharma to discontinue the festival. Be that as it may, the three villages still have three separate places for the worship of Dharma, though the worship of Siva and Vishnu in the form of Sri Krishna seems to have grown much during later years.

Kamarpukur belonged formerly to the estate of the Rajah of Burdwan. The Rajah had made a grant of it to his spiritual preceptor sometime ago. Thus the people of the three villages acknowledged the Goswami family as their Zamindar in the time of which we are speaking. A scion of the family, Gopilal by name, had built a big temple near the market place and dedicated the same to Sri Krishna. Sukhlal, possibly a descendant of Gopilal, was the

head of the family in 1814 A. D. Unlike the Zamindar of Dereypore this man was held in high respect by the villagers on account of his piety, charity and nobleness of mind. He had his residence at the western extremity of the village. And the ruins of his house and his brick-built tomb (*Samadhi*) on the side of a big tank close by, are pointed out even to-day. He died probably in 1824. His son Krishnalal then fell on evil days and had ultimately to sell his Zamindary rights on the village to the Laha family about thirty years after his father's death. The Goswami family must have retired from that village from the time elsewhere and the Lahas remain to this day the Zamindar of the place.

Sukhlal Goswami had a genuine friendship for Khudiram, the head of the Chatterjee family of Dereypore, and was sorely grieved to learn of the dire misfortune that had befallen him through his just quarrels with the wicked Ramananda. He immediately came forward to help his friend in trouble and invited him to come over and live with him at Kamarpukur. Khudiram saw the hand of God in the kind offer of his friend and accepted it with all gratefulness. Thus a few days after the sad event at Dereypore we find Khudiram settled in a thatched hut at Kamarpukur close by his friend's residence. And Sukhlal was not only content to

let his friend have the cottage but made over to him about half an acre of the most fertile of his own fields known to this day as Lakshmi-jala, to enable him to support his little family in future.

CHAPTER III.

Life at Kamarpukur.

The feelings of Srijut Khudiram can better be imagined than described when at the age of thirty-nine he came to settle at Kamarpukur. Fate had indeed been hard with him to take away at one stroke all that he possessed and leave him entirely at the mercy of others—and that, for no fault of his own, but for his scruples to become an instrument in the hand of the wicked to bring undeserved wrong on the heads of his simple and weak neighbours. Yet through all the bitterness and despair that well-nigh overwhelmed him during the dark days of persecution and of sorrow for separation from those whom he held near and dear, he felt from time to time the calm and unwavering assurance of the inner man in him that he had done well in not yielding to the tempter. The good had been looking up to him with admiration and a feeling akin to awe, and the selfish, the worldly and the bad, held his conduct to ridicule but he heeded not their praise or blame. Had it not been for that assurance

within he could hardly have been able to hold himself firmly to the path that he chose for himself. And yet he felt for the time being too stunned by the blow when it came. But he blamed none, not even the wicked Ramananda, for all that had befallen him, when he recovered himself from the effects of the same. For, had he not heard from the scriptures that man reaps in his present incarnation what he had but sown in the past? And had not the Deity whom he worshipped, the pure and immaculate Sri Ramachandra, suffered more than any man has done ever, while He made His sojourn through this 'Vale of tears', to bring home to men that sufferings and miseries are sure to visit all here below and are the best of all teachers? Then, when he thought of the unaccountable way in which help had come to him in his darkest moment, his heart became full of thankfulness towards his God and he felt that he would never be left forsaken, come whatsoever to make his cup of misery fuller than ever; and along with that came the determination in him never to swerve from the path of righteousness in future. Thus we find him living at present at Kamarpukur from day to day without making any plans for the future and passing his days in company with his wife like a "Vanaprastha" or recluse of old, in worship and devotion. He kept a



KHUDIRAM'S COTTAGE.

little hut separate for the purpose and passed many hours of the day within the same in practising exercises helpful to concentration, in prayers and in deep contemplation of and communion with his *Ishtam* or that expression of the Deity to which he had been directed by his spiritual preceptor as being especially helpful to quicken and stimulate his spiritual impulses.

The wants of the family were few and Khudiram, who had a sort of practicality peculiar to himself though regarded by many as a visionary, made up his mind never to increase them. The little plot of land which his friend Sukhlal had given him, began to produce rice more than sufficient to support the family throughout the year; and it was customary with him during the seed-times to offer especial prayers to the Deity and sow a few paddy plants with his own hands in the field uttering the words "Glory to the heroic Scion of Raghu!", before he engaged hired labour to finish its cultivation. And strange as it may appear, the story runs in the family that the field had never failed him even at times when drought and scarcity prevailed throughout the land! The plot of land is called even to this day, as *Lakshmi-jala* or the land belonging to the goddess of wealth, for that very reason.

Secure of the produce of his field, Khudiram found that he could devote himself henceforth to plain living and high thinking towards which he felt himself drawn strongly by the present state of his mind. The climate of Bengal in which so little is needed to keep body and soul together and the old custom of India which made society responsible for providing the necessities of life to the real spiritual aspirant, helped him much to do so. For, his neighbours who had enough to spare would send to him, unasked, what they thought might be wanted for his little family. But here also Khudiram had set up strong barriers in the way of accepting presents, so that he might not lose his self-respect and independence of mind and above all, that he could teach himself the lesson of looking to God, and never to men, for help and comfort even in little things. And the rules that governed his conduct in this direction were *firstly*, that he would never accept anything from one who was not his equal in society as regards the circumstances of birth ; *secondly*, that he would never accept anything even from such a person, in case he disregarded the open injunctions of the scriptures in order to earn the creature comforts in life ; and *thirdly*, that he would never accept anything even from one equal to him in

birth, in case that person took money from one to whom he gave his daughter in marriage ; for, that he regarded as tantamount to selling one's daughter. Strange as the last of the above conditions may sound to the reader, it will appear in a new light when he considers the fact that the custom of marrying one's daughter to the party who paid the most, had prevailed in this part of Bengal until it had become a regular evil, and Khudiram and others of his opinion had to set their faces against it in this manner to rouse self-respect in the mind of the misguided fathers and make it peremptory in them to correct themselves.

Impressed by his recent misfortune with the idea of the transitory nature of wealth and prosperity in this world, Khudiram gave up for ever the idea of struggling to regain his former position and devoted himself entirely to the leading of the higher life in the light of the scriptures. Things transpired as if guided by some higher power to confirm him in that decision. It was at this time that he gained the image of his tutelary Deity *Raghubira*, in a mysterious way. Happening to return, one day, to Kamarpukur after visiting a distant village on business, he felt tired and began to rest a while underneath a tree on the side of the road, which lay across a wide field. Over-

come by fatigue and slumber he now dreamt as if his own *Ishtam*, the divine Ramachandra, was standing before him and telling him that He would like to go to his house and bless him and his family always with His benign presence there. Overjoyed at this unexpected turn of events he was overwhelmed with sorrow the next moment to think of his poverty, and besought with tears in his eyes not to do so, for he had not the means to serve Him properly. At this the Deity seemed to be very pleased and insisted on going with him, assuring him that He would never feel offended, for He knew that he would serve Him to the best of his ability. Khudiram then awoke to wonder at this extraordinary dream. The spot where he saw his own *Ishtam* in his dream seemed to be the one close to the place where he was lying, and on going to make a closer inspection of it, his eyes fell on what seemed to be a little stone image lying by the side of a venomous cobra. But undaunted he went to the spot and found the cobra gone and the image lying as he had seen before. But, Oh, the wonder, when he found the image turn out on examination to be really of the divine Ramachandra, of whom he had dreamt a little while ago ! The devotee in him believed from that moment, that it was indeed Sri Ramachandra whom he had seen, and believed also in the promise

that He would henceforth bless his home and remain with and protect him in a special sense. With a heart full of the ecstasy of devotion and awe, he hastened to his home with the image and placing it in the hut in which he performed his meditations, told the event to his faithful wife.

Khudiram seemed to have made rapid strides towards spiritual realisations at this period of his life. The accounts which we have found of him, state that his noble figure used to glow literally with the fervour of devotion when he repeated his invocation to *Gayatri* in his daily prayers in the morning and at night. He frequently saw the vision of mother *Sitala* as a sweet girl leading and helping him while he busied himself daily with his task of gathering flowers for his worship at break of dawn. And he practised truthfulness so strictly in every thought, word and deed that people came to the belief that no untruth could cross his mind or pass out of his lips even in jest; and such was the love and reverence they felt for the man whose ways of life were so different from theirs, who welcomed poverty and rejoiced to see others happy, who blessed and helped all who came to him for advice and guidance, and settled all disputes among them with justice tempered with kindness—that they gradually came to look upon him as a veritable seer whose

every word could not but be true. They stood up in reverence whenever he passed by their houses, never allowed themselves to talk foolish things before him and would wait to take their bath in the waters of the big tank, Haldarpukur, as long as he was bathing in it.

If Khudiram made such a wonderful impression on the minds of his neighbours, his wife, the sweet and graceful Chandra, did none the less. But the impression that she made was of a different nature altogether. For they found in her the mother, who was ever careful to look after the comforts of even the lowest of them, and would sacrifice her time and what little she had to feed and clothe them whensoever they were ill or in want. The children of the neighbourhood engaged her especial attention and their mothers found in her always such ready sympathy, that they would assemble in her hut in their leisure moments and would seek her advice and help in their troubles. Thus her great mother's heart made her the centre of a large family, as it were, in the village. The elderly ladies of the neighbourhood felt themselves attracted towards her as to their own daughters ; and for those who were equal to her in years she had in reserve such genuine friendship that they longed to be in her company always.

All those and more came to Chandra naturally as she became accustomed to her new mode of living and environments. But inured to plenty, it was hard for her at first to face life thus with nothing else but a stock of deep trust in God. And had it not been for her brave and truly devoted husband, she would most surely have broken down in the attempt. For days there were when such dire want stared her in the face that she knew not how she would be able to cook her next meal for her husband and children, in spite of her observing the strictest economy and depriving herself even of the bare necessities of life. And Khudiram knowing by her looks what was in her heart would encourage her by saying, "Are we not under the protection of the all-powerful *Raghuvira* and ought we not to observe fast on the day on which we are not able to offer Him anything? So be of good cheer and make up your mind to starve with Him as your companion if such be His will". Chandra, who had perfect trust in her noble husband, felt then as if the burden had been taken away from her and went about joyfully in her daily round of duties. And strangely enough presents in the shape of food grains and vegetables would always reach her on such occasions from unexpected quarters and she found that *Raghuvira* was indeed looking after them !

The faithful heart of Chandra and her simple devotion raised her sometimes to mental planes where she would see visions of gods and goddesses. It must be a subjective affair with her, as all visions are, in which the intense fullness of concentration of the mind on a single train of thought finds relief, as it were, in projecting it outwards. Yet it showed none the less that she had been advancing unconsciously towards the habit of thinking deeply on a subject, a habit which in its culmination leads one to the goal of realising the highest spiritual truth of the oneness of Being. It is stated that she had such a vision once of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, at this period of her life.

The eldest boy Ramkumar who was about fifteen years of age at present had been receiving instructions in Sanskrit grammar and general literature and also in Smriti or the Hindu Laws, by joining the *tola* or *chatuspathi* after becoming familiar with the three R's under the village pedagogue. He was also helping the family by earning something by conducting the *puja* or worship of the tutelary gods in the vocation of a priest, in a few private families of the neighbourhood.

It is stated that Ramkumar went one day to perform the worship of the goddess Lakshmi to the

village of Bhursuba, a mile to the north of Kamar-pukur. It was a full-moon night and as the goddess was being worshipped at an advanced hour in the evening, he was rather late in returning home. Chandra getting anxious for the safe return of her boy, waited as long as she could on the threshold of her hut, then went slowly to the crossing of the road leading to Bhursuba with the intention of asking any one who might chance to come from that direction about him. She scanned with eager eyes the meadow through which the road lay, but finding none approaching, waited and fell to musing. She awoke suddenly from her reverie by the sound of footsteps of one coming from the direction of Bhursuba, to find a beautiful lady dressed gaily as if for some festive occasion, and having curious ornaments and jewelry of great value on her, approaching her all alone ! On her drawing near, she accosted her with the inquiry of her boy and the lady replied that she had met him a little while ago and that he would be returning shortly. The simple-hearted Chandra thanked her heartily and then getting anxious for the safety of the lady in turn, asked her not to travel all alone, at that late hour and invited her to be her guest for the night. The lady replied that she could not accept her kind offer as she had to visit certain people that night, but

promised to come to her sometime. She then wended her way by the side of Chandra's home and entered a by-path that led to the house of her wealthy neighbours, the Laha family. Chandra thinking within herself that she had lost her way, hastened to the spot to help her with direction about the road but could not find her again, though she searched her everywhere round the place. And even as she was engaged in this fruitless task, a strong feeling suddenly took possession of her, that she had seen and spoken ere long to none else but to the Mother Lakshmi Herself,—and that She had deigned to visit her thus to offer her consolation about her boy! When Chandra was repeating this vision to her husband with a heart full of grateful devotion, her boy Ramkumar entered the threshold of the home.

Thus passed ten years at Kamarpukur and a few were the events that broke the even tenor of the life of this little family during the time. The betrothal of Katyayani, the daughter of Khudiram, to Kenaram Banerjee of Anur, a village about two miles to the north, and the marriage of Ramkumar with the sister of the same person (Kenaram), were among them. Then there was the sad event, of the death of Sukhlal, sometime during the period, —the friend who had been so faithful to Khudiram

up to the last. But at this time, the family met a slight turn of fortune in the betterment of its financial condition, partly by the earnings of Ramkumar, who had finished his education by this time, and partly by the monthly help that began to come to the family regularly from Ramchand, son of Ramsila, the sister of Khudiram, who had become a *mukhtiar* (lawyer) and joined the bar of Midnapur. Khudiram, as we have told already, was very fond of Ramchand and used to pay visits to him and his family at Salempur from time to time. And the story runs in the family, how after starting once for that place on such a visit, he travelled actually more than half the distance and then postponing it, returned to Kamar-pukur with a basketful of fresh young leaves of the Bel tree that grew by the side of the road, solely for the purpose of offering them to Siva, as he could not find such fresh leaves to offer to Him for some days past, it being the month of February when that kind of trees shed their old leaves.

The management of the affairs of the family having fallen on Ramkumar, Khudiram was able to turn his attention at present to other directions. He felt now a strong inclination within himself to travel about for sometime, leaving all cares behind. Accordingly he planned a pilgrimage on foot to Ramesvara, in the southern-most

part of India. He started early in the year 1824 for this purpose and did not return to Kamarpukur until sometime during the next year. It is said that the *linga* image of Siva named Ramesvara that is still to be seen at the house of Khudiram, was brought by him during this pilgrimage. The year following saw the birth of the second son of Khudiram, and the new-born babe was named Ramesvara in remembrance of the event of his birth a little after the return of his father from the pilgrimage to the sacred shrine of that name.

CHAPTER IV.

Khudiram's Pilgrimage to Gaya and his Extraordinary Dream

According to the Hindus, the beautiful Goddess of Fortune is extremely fickle ; so there is no knowing when she would turn her back towards one whom she has been favouring with her smiles, or when she would begin to bestow favours upon one, whom she has been neglecting hitherto. To the little family of Khudiram however, who had an especial share of her frowns for years successively, she did not cast much of a favourable look until at present, when their financial affairs were placed on a much better footing. For during the years that followed the pilgrimage of his father to Ramesvara, the earnings of Ramkumar increased steadily and the fame of his being a competent knower of the *Smritis* (codes and old usages) began to spread around. It seems moreover, that he had earned a little reputation at the time by his knowledge of astrology. For the story runs in the family how Ramkumar, who had inherited the devotion and the psychic temperament of his

parents, was favoured with a vision one day, of the Divine Mother, whom he worshipped daily, appearing before him and touching his tongue with power while he was in meditation ; and from that moment he was enabled to see future events and tell people about them before they actually took place. It is said, that he foretold thus, the death of his wife, and said that she would meet her death as soon as she would become the mother of a child ! And strangely enough, she died when at the age of thirty-six she gave birth to her only boy, Akshaya ! Numerous other instances are cited by the family even to the present day, about Ramkumar's power of predicting future events ; but we need not enter into their enumeration here. Sufficient for our purpose to know that he helped to increase the income of the family not only by his knowledge of the scriptural laws but also by making use of the power that he possessed of seeing future events. For it endowed him with a special aptitude in the eyes of the people to conduct services and ceremonies for propitiation of the gods in the interest of those that were in trouble or were seized by incurable maladies. Thus passed ten years, one after another, and Khudiram finding himself free to devote his time and energy entirely to religion, made plans for a visit to the shrine of Gaya in the year 1835 A. D.

Hridayaram, son of Hemangini, the favourite niece of Khudiram, related to us a strange event as the immediate cause of the undertaking of the pilgrimage. Katyayani, the eldest daughter of the family became obsessed, he said, by an evil spirit at the time. And when Khudiram had told it in the name of God, to depart elsewhere leaving his daughter free, it promised never to come near her again, but entreated him at the same time to liberate it in turn, from the dreadful state of bondage to which it had brought itself by its evil deeds in the past, by offering prayers for its sake at the shrine at Gaya. Kind-hearted Khudiram took pity on the sad plight of the spirit and agreed readily to its proposal. Be that as it may, the story goes very little beyond supporting the fact that all the members of the little family of Khudiram, were possessed of finely sensitive nerves and had their psychic vein open in some form or other.

The pilgrimage to Gaya was undertaken by Khudiram at the age of sixty. Tall, slim and fair, and graceful of form, he was blessed besides with an iron constitution. He did not hesitate now to perform the journey to that distant place on foot, even at that advanced age, and started early in the year, so that he might reach his destination by the beginning of March after a short visit to Benares.

As an orthodox Hindu, he believed firmly in the injunction of the scriptures that offerings and prayers made at the shrine of Gaya during the 'sweet' * month of Chaitra (March), bring infinite blessings to the departed spirits of one's ancestors.

It is impossible to realise in these days of hurry and bustle, the joy that used to thrill the pilgrim's soul in India, in old times. The mild climate of the country, the beautiful scenery that caught his eyes at every step, the life in the open air in harmony with Nature and with all ideas of responsibility that troubled and worried him at home, dropped for the time being—all combined to bring home to his mind a sense of freedom which he had not tasted since his days of childhood. The shackles of artificiality which grow round one as one advances in years, would drop off one's soul on such an occasion, and the spirit asserting itself over matter would make one think deeply on the Whence, Why and Wherefore of all human affairs. Again, the uncertainty of getting much of the creature comforts on the way, and the dangers that beset the roads, brought in the idea of man's helplessness and the wisdom of

* The Chaitra or the last month of the Hindu year, has been designated in old Samskrit literature as the month of '*Madhu*' or sweetness, the literal meaning of the word being 'honey.' It might have been so named on account of its being the last month of the spring-tide.

dependence on the Lord, to the pious mind, which it seldom experienced in the safe surroundings of its daily life amongst friends and relations. Thus a deep sense of calm and repose used to pervade the mind of the pilgrim, as he wended his way slowly, day after day, to realise the fulfilment of the long cherished desire of his heart. And thus rivers and rocks, shrines and images of hoary antiquity, nay, the very stones and the dust of the places of pilgrimage, were idealised, worshipped and surrounded with a bright halo by the devotion of the faithful devotee.

Such must have been the experiences of Khudiram as he approached the portals of the old city of Gaya, the place which had a tradition and fame for sanctity of its own dating from even the pre-Buddhistic era. For did not the mighty Buddha prefer the hilly tract of Gaya-sirsha for his meditations and austerities to all other sacred places ? And does not the meaning of that name itself, 'the head of Gaya,' point unmistakably to the existence of a longstanding tradition before his time ?

About a month passed for Khudiram in offering prayers and observing customary ceremonials in the minor shrines in the hills and plains around, before the priest directed him to do the same in the central temple of the place, containing

the hallowed relics of the foot-print of the Lord. It is natural that he should find himself overcome with emotion at the very sight of the holy relics, aye, he could almost see with eyes open what he was directed to meditate upon, the vast conclave of the spirits of the departed, and amongst them his own ancestors, standing in worshipful reverence around the throne of the mighty Saviour of souls, Who has taken upon Himself the task of saving mankind from going for ever into evil ways, and in His great mercy has left His foot-print and the privilege of worshipping the same for poor, self-forgetful mortals. Then after worshipping that effulgent Being, when he began to do the same to the members of the assembly in whose line he had taken his birth and presented them with his humble offerings, he felt himself instilled with the peace that 'passeth all understanding' in the joy of reunion in the Lord, the essence of infinite love, with those who had passed out of this earthly life long long ago.

The ceremony ended, and after prostrating himself before the sacred relics with tears of devotion in his eyes he came away to his humble lodgings to pass the rest of the day. But his mind dwelt with fondness again and again on the bright vision that had come to him within the holy precincts of

the shrine. And at night when he laid himself to rest, the self-same vision came to him in sleep, a hundred times brighter and more vivid than what it had been during the day. Amidst the hushed silence of devotion in the great conclave of the departed, he heard a voice calling him by his name with infinite tenderness and compassion. He looked forward in wonder to find what it meant, when to his surprise he found that the great Saviour, the effulgent Being, who formed the central figure of the assemblage was Himself addressing him ! With trepidation and awe, and all his mind concentrated, Khudiram now heard the inspiring and hopeful words—"I take my birth again and again to save the human kind ; I find for them new ways to Dharma (the goal to be attained through religion) to bring them to Perfect Enlightenment ; the time has come for Me to be born again soon to fulfil that purpose, and I shall honour your humble devotion and love for Me by appearing as your child !"

Khudiram, entirely taken aback at this wonderful proclamation, felt elated nevertheless, at the great honour that was thus accorded him. But remembering his poor circumstances and his unworthy self, the very next moment, he began to plead with a heavy heart to decline the privilege. For, he was then overcome with the idea that it was

not in his power to serve the Divine-child in the way that It should be done ! And while he was in the midst of his pleadings the dream vanished and he awoke with a sudden start.

The strange dream created such a deep impression on the mind of Khudiram that he could not understand for some minutes after awakening, whether he was in this world or in that of the departed. Then, when he became perfectly conscious of the real situation, he went on thinking deeply within himself to find out the answer to the question, was it really the phantasy of the overburdened brain that had haunted him thus erelong, or something higher that appeared through the mercy of the Deity? For, the belief prevailed among the religiously inclined of his countrymen that dreams relating to God or the great Saviours, which left such strong impression on the mind, were to be regarded as visions obtained from higher planes of consciousness, and going to be realised in the near future. Khudiram decided in the end to keep quiet about the affairs and to wait and watch carefully the turn of events in his future life.

CHAPTER V.

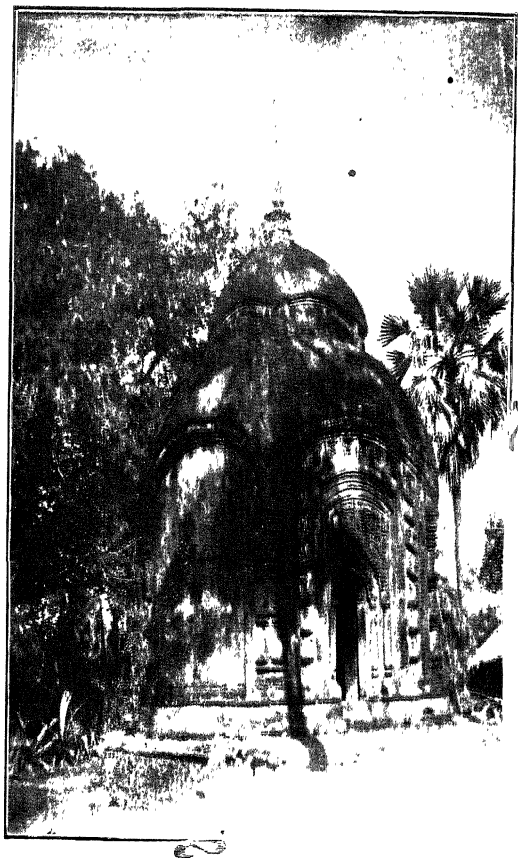
Chandra's Vision and the Birth of Gadadhar.

Khudiram returned to his native village some time in April next. The first thing that drew his attention, within a short time of his arrival, was the change that seemed to have come upon his dear wife during his absence. She appeared to him like one transformed by divine touch, overflowing with the fulness of sympathy of the heart for everyone around. Possessed always of an active temperament, she had kept herself buoyant hitherto in ministering to the wants of her little family and in looking after the proper arrangement of the daily offerings and sacrifices to the family Deity Sri Raghubir. But now the mother in her would not be content to remain within those bounds and would make her constantly look after the wants and comforts of her poor neighbours even before those of the family. And though it did not mean a neglect of those whom she called her own, nevertheless it was often at the cost of great personal sacrifice that she could help them. For she herself was not rich and

had not much to give away after meeting the wants of her own family. Khudiram found that she would not partake of her daily meals before enquiring first, personally, whether her poor neighbours had enough to eat on the day. And if she found that for some reason or other any one of them had not been able to procure it, she would privately give her own meal away ; and that she would do even for the beggars who visited her doors.

Then, as days passed, Khudiram became aware also of the strange turn that her devotions to God had taken at that time. For, instead of looking up to the family Deity with awe and reverence as she used to do before, she would regard and love Him as her own eldest child, Who could never feel offended with the shortcomings of His poor and weak mother. An unwonted sweetness also surrounded her daily duties about the worship-room. Strong emotions would overcome her at times in the midst of them, and she could see visions of strange gods and goddesses appearing before her as lovely little children addressing her in sweet familiar words and asking sometimes for food offerings.

But the astonishment of Khudiram knew no bounds on the day that his simple-minded wife told him of the strange experiences that had come to her while he had been to Gaya. She said, "I had a



THE SIVA-TEMPLE IN FRONT OF KHUDIRAM'S COTTAGE.

dream one night that you had come; and that before I could know if you had entered the room, I found you locking me within your loving embrace and I felt so happy ! But on looking up to your face the next moment, I found that you had been so transformed as I could hardly recognise you. Your appearance seemed to be more like the effulgent forms of those whom we worship than of any man I had ever seen. A strange feeling then possessed me as if I was in another's embrace. I shrieked and struggled to free myself, and in the attempt, I awoke with a sudden start to find me alone in my bed shivering all over with fright and dismay ! Then again, a few days later as I was standing one day with my poor companion Dhani, the daughter of our blacksmith neighbour, before the temple of Siva in front of our cottage, I was so startled to find the image alive ! It began to emanate ethereal waves of exquisite, supernatural light at first slowly and then with a rapidity which can hardly be imagined. The waves filled the room, then gaining in volume and strength suddenly darted towards me like the mighty bore in the river, and deluged me completely as I was struggling to get away—and I fell down on the ground losing my consciousness ! I awoke to find myself in the arms of my companion, who however

was perfectly unaware of what had taken place. But instead of feeling weak for it, I felt myself stronger than ever and borne up with a strange elation of spirit. I have the impression since then as if a part of the self-same waves is still within me, making me feel as I did before while in the family way!"

Strange as were the dream and the vision, Khudiram could not but feel in them a confirmation of his own wonderful experience at Gaya. He told her that he too had been blessed with some strange vision of late, which seemed to point to the fact of the birth of the Divine child in the family in the near future; but it was best not to relate such experiences to every one. So Chandra kept quiet, though the fullness of her heart shone on her face and made her look tender and graceful, more than ever before; and it soon transpired that she was really in the way to maternity even at that advanced age of forty-five.

Days and even months passed in cheerful performance of duties with a perfect resignation to the Lord, and at last the time arrived when Chandra would soon be blessed with the birth of one, whose coming into the world was heralded to her by such strange visions and experiences. She felt happy and withal anxious for the future turn of events. For, who can ever feel certain about things which are beyond the farthest limits of reason?

It was on the morning of the sixth day of the month of Falgun, corresponding to the 17th day of the English calendar month of February, 1836 A.D. —the beginning of spring-tide in Bengal, when all nature was revelling in the fresh waves of life and energy that had newly come upon it, that Chandra felt as if she could no longer perform her daily duties in the worship-room and the kitchen. She grew anxious for there was none to take her place in their performance on the day, and she expressed her fear to her husband. But Khudiram assured her that it could not be so, that howsoever ill she might feel, the Divine child would never enter the world by creating a disturbance in the services of the Deity. And strangely enough, Chandra felt herself stronger than ever from that very moment, and attended to all her duties throughout the day. Nevertheless, everything was kept in readiness for the advent of the child, and Dhani was requested to sleep with her during the night.

All went on well until past midnight, and in that auspicious mystic hour when it was giving place slowly to the awakening of a new day, Chandra felt sure that the time had come, and removed herself with the help of her companion to the hut in which she had her oven for boiling paddy and the husking machine. For, besides the

two rooms in the cottage which served as bed-rooms to Khudiram and Ramkumar, there was not a single place in it which could be used for her lying-in. Slowly as the eastern horizon was becoming aglowed with crimson in spite of the darkness that was still brooding over the earth below, she gave birth to the child whose advent was awaited with so much solicitous tenderness and anxiety by her. Having helped the mother, when Dhani came to look for the new-born babe she was startled to find that the child had slipped gradually away into the cool oven and was lying there besmeared with its ashes ! The sacred sound of the conch-shell then announced to the world the advent of the child, and the ladies of the rich Laha family who had been great friends to Chandra and who had come there on hearing that she was unwell, found to their astonishment that 'the baby looked almost as big as a child of six months!'

The necessary rites were performed then on the sixth day of the birth of the child ; and the ceremony of taking the babe out of the room to look, for the first time, at the moon and the wide world, took place when it was about three weeks' old. Then after propitiating the gods, the child was given the name of Gadadhara (the Wielder of the Club), in memory of the strange dream that came

to its father while he was at Gaya to worship the footprints of Gadadhara or Vishnu.

The astrologers were called in next to read the pre-natal influences that would help or hinder to shape the life of the babe in the world, and they prophesied great things after necessary calculations about its future life. They said that the child would not only have a strong religious consciousness to liberate himself from the bonds of *Maya*, but would discover a new path to liberation for the good of the many and would pass his days in a temple surrounded by many seekers after religion and would be looked upon by men as the Deity-incarnate. He would thus be a strong spiritual light to illumine the minds of men and would help to establish the religious consciousness which had grown dim in the world.

. Next, the ceremony of giving the first diet of boiled rice, the food which the child would have to take for nourishment as long as he would be in this life, took place when he was six months' old. Khudiram was able with the help of his rich Zamindar friend Dharmadas Laha, to feed not only the gentry of the village but also a great number of poor people who came to his doors on the occasion. And the child grew in loveliness as days passed on in such a way as to hold in fascination all the ladies

of the neighbourhood, who would henceforth create an opportunity to visit Chandra every day at some hour or other, simply for the pleasure of taking her beautiful baby into their arms for a while, and they said that the little Gadadhar became extremely naughty as he grew in years.

CHAPTER VI.

A few words on the Unique Experiences of Gadadhara's Parents.

We have recorded the fact of some unique experiences occurring in the lives of Khudiram and his wife before the birth of Gadadhara. There are some more of the kind to relate to the reader before we proceed to express our humble opinion on them. The simple-minded rural people of the village and Khudiram's own relations, whom we found still living when we first visited Kamarpukur in 1887, soon after the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, had narrated them to us. The words of such people would not satisfy, perhaps, the modern idea of competent evidence, but the fact that they had no axe of their own to grind by relating such stories, and that they had very little idea then of the unique greatness of the Master, even from hearsay, go a great length to convince the unbiassed mind that those facts should have our careful consideration. Moreover, we should always remember that the qualitative value of what

we call competent evidence, would always vary according to the predisposition of the mind that goes to test it, and that wherein the mind sets against itself not to accept anything beyond the most ordinary of human experiences, is as much a hindrance to arriving at truth, as the mind that always holds itself ready to receive anything and everything and is marked down with the designation 'credulous.'

Besides the descendants of Khudiram's own children, we had the good fortune of meeting the sons and a daughter of Dharmadas Laha, the survivors of the family of the Pynes, who had seen better days and were great friends of the Chatterjees, and also the members, both male and female, of various other families who were connected more or less intimately with the Chatterjee family during the birth and childhood of Gadadhara. They gave their evidences in support of the unique experiences independently and without any selfish motive whatsoever. What could she, for instance, have expected of us when Prasanna, the widowed daughter of Dharmadas Laha, the rich Zamindar friend of Khudiram—whom we had the good fortune to meet several times, related to us, such facts as the following :—

“Chandra was looked upon by me and my companions as a queer woman and as one perfectly

unacquainted with the ways of the world, for telling us all her extraordinary visions and experiences. She not only saw gods and goddesses and held conversations with them, but used to smell sometimes exquisite fragrance of flowers and incense where there was none, and heard frequently the tinklings of a child's anklet about her while she was deeply engaged in her household duties, before the birth of Gadadhara.

“ She used to have such strange experiences at times, even after the child was born. Well do we remember the row that she made one day by calling us all and her husband too because as she said, she found the child so heavy that she could not manage to lift it to her arms with her utmost effort ! And still, on another day she entreated her husband and every one whom she knew to call in the assistance of an able exorcist, for she saw her sleeping child, who was seven months old at the time, transformed into a big man for a while ! She fancied that ghosts were playing such tricks with her baby in this manner and feared they might finally take it away from her. We, of course, always laughed at her for her such wild fancies and fears.”

When asked if she knew anything of Chandra's vision before the Siva-temple, she said, “ Don't I ? and didn't I warn her solemnly not to repeat that

and the dream in which she fancied herself to be in another's arms, for the wicked might go to the length of imputing a bad character to her? But still she would go on repeating them sometimes before her friends—such a self-forgetful, confiding and unsuspecting nature had Chandra !”

The late learned Professor Max Muller in his little book entitled “Sri Ramakrishna, His Life and Teachings,” in dealing with these unique experiences in the life of Gadadhara’s parents, has discussed at length, on the fact of the growth round a nucleus of ordinary facts, of accretions by what he calls “the dialogic process”. He has gone to the length of suggesting that such accretions must have taken place around Chandra’s vision before the Siva-temple and transformed it gradually into its present form, making it appear very much like the fact of the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin, the mother of Jesus the Christ.

The only reason he advanced for such a suggestion, is the fact that the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna were almost all of them well versed in English and acquainted with the Christian idea of the immaculate conception; that in their subconscious attempt to look up to the greatness of their Guru or spiritual guide in every respect, they had gone on transforming unawares words and

phrases in their narrative of the vision little by little, while they repeated it amongst themselves or for the enlightenment of the new proselytes. And the changes that appeared at first to be insignificant and were overlooked and tacitly accepted, assumed perceptible proportions in a short time, though they themselves were perfectly innocent in their gradual introduction and acceptance of them.

With due deference to the learned Professor, we must say that he has missed or overlooked a strong point against his statement of the case. For, if it be true that the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna were gathered from the class of men who had received a tolerably good western education, then it goes without saying that they had acquired at the same time, the western habit of careful statement of facts; and for the reason of that they would have been the persons least likely to lay themselves open to "the dialogic process." The fact is that they heard of the vision before the Siva temple first from the lips of the Master while he spoke to them about his mother and her strange visions from time to time, and then had it corroborated by such persons at Kamarpukur who were most likely to know of it. Again as the Hindu scriptures, the Puranas in general, are full of instances of different degrees of immaculate conception

we do not see the force of the argument that the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna had to go to the Christian Purana, the Holy Bible, to get their idea of it.

A close examination of the Hindu scriptures will reveal to us the fact that while they acknowledged universally the occurrence of extraordinary experiences in the lives of the parents of great religious geniuses who were regarded in later times as incarnations of Isvara or the Ruler of the Universe, they did not hold it necessary that their birth in each case should take place through supernatural process. The parents of Rama, of Krishna, of Buddha and of all the other Incarnations had all had unique experiences, more or less, before and after the birth of their noble sons, and yet the Puranas have not recorded the fact that their mothers had borne them through such a process. Again the fact of immaculate conception has been explicitly recorded by them in certain cases of individuals who were not as great. As an instance of the latter kind we may point out to the reader the birth of Karna, the noble hero of the Mahabharata. It is a well-known fact that Kunti the mother of the hero, gave birth to this child of hers through the touch of the Sun-god and yet retained her virginity, and getting married afterwards became

the mother of the five Pandava brothers. Considering the facts stated above, the conclusion seems to us to be inevitable that the Hindu scriptures rather point to the fact that the extraordinary experiences that come in the lives of the parents of Incarnations, do not go against the possibility of natural process through which human births take place.

The conclusion at which we have arrived above by our examination of Hindu scriptures, is in harmony with the mandates of reason and the discoveries of modern science besides. For the theory of heredity which supports the fact of noble parents having noble progeny, if acknowledged to be true, will drive us to conclude that the minds of the parents of a Krishna, a Buddha and a Jesus, must have lived and moved in much higher planes than those of ordinary humanity. And does not the rise of the mind to higher planes of thought and unselfishness enable us to get glimpses of things which the ordinary sense-bound mind can never have? Thus the theory of heredity leads us to acknowledge the occurrence of the unique experiences in the lives of the parents of the Incarnations as quite probable.

The Hindus, who believe in transmigration, however, do not go to the theory of heredity to find the final solution to the problem of what causes

men to be born with different degrees of power—physical, mental, moral and even spiritual. Heredity according to them, can find the answer only to the material side of it, but not to its spiritual counterpart. For, it has nothing to say when the problem is pushed a step forward into the form,—what causes particular individuals to go to parents who can transmit to them particular physical and mental capabilities? The answer to it, they hold, can only be found in the theory of the individual Karma, which makes one fit to receive a particular kind of heredity.

But on going to examine the lives of the great religious geniuses, the Hindu mind came face to face with facts, which could not be explained by this theory of heredity and individual Karma even. For Karma, which is only a finer form of the theory of cause and effect, can be said to exist only in cases where the effects produced are of the nature of their causes. For the effect is the cause transformed and, therefore, there cannot be anything in it that is not in the cause itself. But the lives of the Incarnations appear on examination, to be so dissimilar in nature to those of their parents who have to supply the causal link of heredity, both in regard to the quality and the quantity of power expressed in them, that it is not possible to regard them

as related to each other in the form of cause and effect. For where do we find even a thousandth part of the purity, unselfishness, love for their fellow beings and spirituality that a Krishna, a Buddha and a Jesus manifested, in the lives of their respective parents? There were hundreds of Kshatriya chieftains and thousands of carpenters living almost the same kind of life at the time, as did Vasudeva, Suddhodana and Joseph, the fathers of Krishna, Buddha and Jesus respectively. Therefore, nothing can be more unreasonable than to suppose that the lives of the Incarnations are but the necessary effects of such ordinary lives. And then again, if it be said by those others who believe in Karma that the lives of the parents supply only the material conditions through which Karma operates to bring about effects in the present lives of Incarnations commensurate with causes in their previous lives, who will explain how even after the destruction in their present lives of the whole Karmic chain of cause and effect with the bondage of Maya, the fact of constantly doing good to humanity remains as a residuum, as it were, defying explanation by any theory of causation? This residuum, unaffected by the law of Karma and distinctly beyond the plane of its operation, forms the real purpose of these divine lives and consequently

the real explanation of their birth. The Hindu scriptures, therefore, have come to the conclusion that such giant personalities could not have come to the world through the ordinary process of Karma or causation, even when combined with the operation of heredity, and that they in fact, were beyond all bondage of Karma and must have appeared in the world out of their own free choice to do good to humanity. Then as time went on, the belief in the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, independent and immanent as well as a personal ruler of the creation, made people to look upon the Incarnations as but different manifestations of that self-same Being, Who in His infinite grace takes birth from time to time among men by accepting human limitations, to enlighten and liberate them from the bondages of life.

Such in short is the history of the development of the theory of Incarnation as we find it in the present day, in the whole range of Hindu philosophy. It remains for us to see now, whether this theory is compatible or not with the subject of the present discourse, namely, the birth of the Incarnations through the ordinary process and the fact of their parents having unique experiences at the time of their appearance. It is evident from what has been stated above that the Hindu scriptures deny

the bondage of Karma to the Incarnations themselves but not to their parents. Therefore everything, besides the event of giving birth to such powerful personages, in the lives of the latter, must occur not through any kind of supernatural process but as results of their previous Karma or in other words, through the operation of the ordinary law of cause and effect. But the latter event would take place in their lives only through the grace of the Lord. Now the question is, does that grace presuppose any standard of fitness in its recipients? The answer given to it has always been in the negative, if we do not bring into account the one universal condition common to all religious aspirants that there should be an intense struggle in their minds to proceed Godward.

The explanation of grace has thus been placed beyond the limits of human reason, for it depends entirely on the Supreme Will which is above all conditions of causation. But the effects of it have been recorded; and it has been found out that in every case it uplifted the mind of its recipient to higher planes of thought and unselfishness, and enabled it to have glimpses of things transcending the sensuous plane. Thus the occurrence of extraordinary experiences in the lives of the parents of the Incarnations is not only supported but confirmed by the theory.

Again, when we consider the fact that the birth of the Incarnations through compassion is altogether a free act of condescension on the part of the Deity, for raising and enlightening the human kind, it is not possible for us to set a limit to the depth of human level to which He would come down for the purpose. Therefore the argument that sets up immaculate conception as necessary to His appearance in the human plane, loses its force completely. The Hindu scriptures on the other hand assert that when the Deity condescends to take His birth among men, He assumes the frailties and weaknesses common to the human kind, and by transcending those by intense struggle sets up an ideal before men that they might also follow in order to liberate themselves from such bondages. It is evident therefore, that to ascribe any kind of super-natural power to the Incarnations which they do not earn here as a result of their intense struggle to conquer the flesh and the frailties of the mind—or to make them appear in the human plane with such singular advantageous conditions as the ordinary run of humanity can never have, would be, according to the Hindu scriptures, an attempt to baffle the very purpose for which the Deity undergoes Incarnations. And does not the theory of immaculate conception in its attempt to ward

off the touch of carnality from the birth of the Incarnations, suggest at the same time the circumstance of their starting in this life with such unequal advantages as regards purity and power? The Hindus, therefore, can understand the greatness of a Jesus depending entirely on the will of the Father and suffering crucifixion at the hands of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, while he could have called in legions of angels to help him to baffle their machinations—but cannot very well do so when his advent into the world is described to have taken place under conditions which equipped him with advantages which are not granted to even a single individual of the human kind.

The reader must not imagine however, from what has been stated above as the outlook of the Hindu scriptures on the theory of God-incarnations, that there is no record of cases in them of manifestations of supernatural powers or of extraordinary conditions of birth in regard to them. The miracles stated to have been performed by Sri Krishna from almost the very day of his birth, the conception of the widowed lady who gave birth to Sankara, by the powerful touch of the God Siva, and various other instances of the kind, would have gone against us, had we attempted to do so. Our point of contention in the above discourse has been to

impress on the reader the fact that the Hindu scriptures, while they acknowledge the occurrence of extraordinary cases of birth and of manifestations of super-human power in several of the Incarnations, do not hold them to be inevitably necessary in the formation of their lives; that they have recorded certain cases as God-incarnations in spite of there being no display in them of such extraordinary births and powers, and that they seem to support the fact that unique experiences had entered and would enter into the lives of the parents of all the Incarnations even though they had taken or would take their birth in this world in the common human way. The humble opinion we have arrived at, therefore, by our examination of the Hindu scriptures on the subject, is that the theory which regards super-human births to be necessary to God-incarnations, must have been a later growth; and that the record of the strange experiences that came invariably to their parents before and after their birth, and a great deal of which can be explained to have occurred in the natural way with the help of the Yoga philosophy of the Hindus—must have contributed much to the growth of the same in the hands of the ignorant and the credulous.

CHAPTER VII.

The Early Days of Gadadhar.

It is wonderful always to watch the gradual unfoldment of a child's mind as it comes into contact with the outside world, day after day. And, in case where the object of that study is no ordinary but a highly precocious one, as the mind of our little Gadadhar, the sentiment of wonder verges often to that of rapturous awe as before a miracle. The child observes, imitates, thinks and struggles to express itself as much as we do, only perhaps with this difference that it does all these things mechanically ; or, in other words, it is guided and led into them by the impulse of the habit that has grown upon it all through the long series of its past Incarnations. That goes to explain again, how every child-mind looks at things and events of life from an angle of vision peculiarly its own; since the very day of its entrance into its present Incarnation, every child begins to observe the outside world, takes suggestions from its various phases according to its

capacity, and ultimately forms and expresses its own conclusions about them, in a manner quite different from the rest of the world.

The parents of Gadadhar, who had to watch over the growth of undoubtedly one of the most precocious child-minds of the age, must have noted early with ever-increasing wonder how it used to form its likes and dislikes of persons and things in a manner peculiarly its own, how on many an occasion it used to enquire about them in a way that pointed most certainly to the depth into which it entered within itself in its cogitations about them, and how at times it would flash forth its own views and conclusions about them most unexpectedly, like an elderly man. They had found out moreover, on more than one occasion, that their little Gadadhar would resist most stubbornly if an attempt were made to make him accept ways or do things through fear of punishment, while otherwise he would be quite amenable to reason and love. Thus with the passing of days, they had the pleasure to find that the child of their old age was growing into a healthy little boy whose unique ways of looking at persons and things, combined with its habits of fearlessness, truthfulness, and other virtues promised for him a great future. And did not the wonderful visions they had of him before and after he was

born point to that ? Thus with joy and trepidation they performed the ceremony of initiating the boy in the three R's, as soon as he reached his fifth year and also invoked upon him the blessings of the Goddess of learning and fine arts, the divine Mother Sarasvati. From that day, the little Gadadhar was sent daily to the *pathasala* (lit. reading room) or the neighbouring village school, which used to have its sittings in the spacious *Natmandapa* or the hall for musical and theatrical performances on festive occasions, of the Laha family, the Zemin-dar or the landlord of the village.

From what we have gathered from the various sources of the early days of Gadadhar's life, we have been struck with the wonderful qualities of the heart that he manifested from the very beginning. All the accounts of these days of his life are unanimous on the point that he used to attract everyone towards him by his winning ways. The elderly ladies of the neighbourhood used to love and regard him as one of their own children, the boys and girls of his own age would always be led by him in their sports and pastimes, and even grown-up people would feel so much attracted after meeting him once, that they would invite him into their own families and send him presents as token of their love, every now and then. As an instance of the same, we can

relate the visit of our little Gadadhar to a well-to-do family at Bhursubo, a village situated about a mile to the north of Kamarpukur. The headman of the family was perhaps the richest landlord within many miles around and had earned a great reputation for himself on account of his liberality and large-heartedness. It is said even to this day, how on more than one occasion he invited to his place a hundred thousand men of the Brahmin class alone from many a mile around, and made elaborate arrangements for feeding and providing them each with suitable presents! The poor and the lowly always found his hospitable doors open to give them a hearty welcome, and his kind heart and liberal hand ever ready to help them on every emergency. The big tanks that he excavated in and about his village, such as, the 'elephant-tank,' the 'pleasure-tank,' etc., for the benefit of the people, the large mango-groves that he planted and dedicated to the use of his poor neighbours, the temples that he erected in the neighbourhood, and various other things that still bear the stamp of his name—all go to prove that he did not bear the title of Raja in vain.

Now it so happened, that Raja Manick Chandra Banerjee knew Khudiram, the father of our little Gadadhar, for a long time and valued highly the

friendship of that poor but proud and austere Brahmin who had preferred abject poverty to falsehood and the creature-comforts of life, and had borne it so bravely in silence and submission without demeaning himself by asking favours from his rich but lukewarm friends. He watched his career with great interest, invited him frequently to his own place, was never officious to come forward with his help, having regard for his sensitive disposition, and sought his disinterested advice on many an important occasion of his own life. Thus the two men of rare and genuine merit, who were so wide apart from each other as regards status which wealth created for them in society, met frequently on equal terms and esteemed and respected each other on account of the manly qualities they both possessed. And thus Khudiram who always felt himself free in company with Raja Manick, took his little boy Gadadhar with him on one of such visits, thinking it would please his friend to see the little one, with whom he had been blessed so late in life. Now, little Gadadhar behaved himself in such a way on the occasion that he became quite a favourite with the Raja and all his household since that day; and they henceforth used to take him over to Bhursubo regularly and loaded him with valuable presents on his return. It is said that

Ramjaya, the brother of the Raja, once remarked to Khudiram : " Brother, your Gadadhar is not an ordinary child ; the divinity within shines so clear through his little body and mind that he makes us feel as if we are before the Divine-child Gopala, we worship !" And strange as it may appear, our little Gadadhar who was less than five years old at the time, never felt nervous to go and visit the family of the Raja, all alone, or sometimes with a servant whom he did not know before.

So, our little Gadadhar knew no fears even from his earliest days, and not only was he not afraid of approaching strangers, but with his radiant smile, his bright answers to questions and precocious remarks, and above all, his loving and endearing ways, would make them feel as if he were of their own kith and kin. It is said that he was fearless in other ways also, and would always feel undaunted where others of his own age became invariably nervous and frightened. As an instance of the kind, we shall narrate here a little incident that happened in the family about this time. We have told the readers already, how all the relatives of Khudiram had the psychic temperament. His wife Chandra, his son Ramkumar, his daughter Katyayani, and even his sister Ramsila who used to visit the family from time to time, had all more

or less the temperament. Of those, the last one, Ramsila, would lose herself so completely in her meditations of the goddess Sitala, as to feel herself identified with the goddess on some days and would speak and behave on such occasions, as one possessed by that Higher Being. It is said that she used to look quite different from her ordinary self at these times and always excited the feeling of awe and reverence and fear and wonder in the heart of every one who saw her, with her predictions and blessings and powers of healing diseases. The family would treat her on such occasions as the goddess herself and would listen and obey her commands implicitly. Now, Gadadhar, who was very fond of his aunt, had the first opportunity of seeing her in one of these strange moods when he was less than five years old. It is said, that he became much astonished at first to find her behaving so differently, but instead of getting frightened, remained near and watched her carefully and at last whispered to his mother : " It would be such a fun if the one, who possesses my aunt now, would come upon me, for then I shall be able to see things as she has been seeing ! "

Even from this time Gadadhar showed great aptitude for imitating perfectly the voice and manners of others in fun and proved to his parents that

he possessed dramatic powers and a great sense of humour. Again, his father was greatly astonished to find that he possessed such a wonderful and tenacious memory as to be able to repeat everything that he had been once told and to retain it in his mind for ever. It was the custom in Hindu families to make little boys learn the genealogical tables of their forefathers and little verses in Sanskrit, in salutation to various gods and goddesses. They were told, besides, stories from the two great national epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* even before they were formally initiated into the mysteries of the three R's. And little Gadadhar had not only learnt these things from his father's lips, but could repeat besides, verbatim, some portions of the Bengali version of the epics by simply hearing his father reading them, even before he learned the alphabets. And we can well imagine how eagerly he looked forward to the time when he would be able to read the sacred epics himself like the rest of the family. He mastered the alphabet quickly and made such strides after joining the school that in less than a year he was able to read the Bengali versions of them as well as all the other Bengali books that he could lay his hands on. Indeed from that time forward he dived deep daily, in those sacred books, the fountain-head of every Indian

inspiration of later times, and the poet in him pondered and brooded over the noble characters and their doings in such a way as to make of them living and moving personalities around him. His powerful imagination would at times spread its golden wings over immense gaps of time and space and carry him over to the doors of the palaces of Ayodhya or Hastinapur to witness the magnanimous deeds of Rama, his faithful Sita and his devoted brother Lakshmana, or the noble doings of the five Pandava brothers. Thus passed the days of our little Gadadhar after he had joined the school, with absorbing interest in the sacred books and the characters contained therein and they helped to educate and mould his young head and heart rapidly, and in accord with the old Indian ideals, even from this time.

The folklore of the villages around had a deep attraction for our little Gadadhar, besides the great epics. Bengal had always been great for poetical culture and its poetry had flowed mainly through the two distinct sacred channels of the cult of the worship of the Divine motherhood and that of the worship of Krishna and his beloved Radha. The miraculous doings and stories of self-manifestation of the local deities of many villages also, used to attract the imagination of the poets

and their verses and hymns were being widely circulated by the swarm of beggars who sang them to the edification of the people as they daily visited the doors of every family of the villages around for alms. Manuscripts of some of these stories and hymns could be found at the time and our little Gadadhar used to get hold of these and made copies of them, some of which are still to be found preserved in the family and in the Ramakrishna Math, at Belur in the district of Howrah in Bengal. Legends, such as those of the Divine Mother Yogadya of Kshiragram, who it is said had been brought over by Mahavira, the devoted Monkey-general of Rama after killing Mahi-Ravana, the brother of Ravana, the demon-king of Ceylon, and placed in that village since that time—of the famous image of Siva at Tarakeswar, a village about eighteen miles east of Kamarpukur—or of that of the big tank about ten miles from Khudiram's place and known even to this day as the tank of Ranajit Ray, the man, who, it is said, had such unique devotion towards the Divine Mother that She appeared in the family for a time as his own little daughter—legends such as these, and their number was numerous, had great fascination for the mind of our little Gadadhar. His young eyes shed tears while he used to read them and his

young heart felt a deep yearning for a sight of the Divine Mother. And thus he passed many hours and days even from this time in trying to imagine the wonderful beauty of the Divine Mother and Her great compassion towards the devotees or the great love of the Lord Krishna towards the simple-hearted shepherd boys and girls in the shady and beautiful groves of Brindavan.

It must not be imagined however, from what we have said before, that our little Gadadhar became so much absorbed in his study of the sacred epics and the folklore of his age that he took no interest in plays and sports as is natural to a child of his age. With all his high propensities and his precocious mind, he was entirely a child of nature and did instinctively the proper things. Therefore, as it was natural for his vigorous mind to get concentrated deeply on the subject of his study, so it was natural also for it to become the same in sports and pastimes which he enjoyed, and it is said that none of his companions excelled him in climbing trees, in swimming, running and in pursuit of games, such as, 'hide and seek,' 'hadu-du-du,' 'hunsh-hunsh' etc., and none ever excelled him in devising new games and playing all sorts of boyish pranks, such as, robbing orchards, or teasing and fighting people who became angry with them

on account of their noisy mirth and fun or in doing things which disturbed the elderly people and which they were forbidden to do. Indeed, in all such matters, our little Gadadhar always had his companions.

As an instance of the kind, we may tell the reader of the incident which took place one day in the ladies' bathing *ghat* at Haldarpukur, the big tank close to the house of our little Gadadhar. The boys were having one of their 'ripping' times in the water on the day, to the great inconvenience of the ladies, when an elderly lady, who was muttering her prayers after her bath, as was the custom, became very much annoyed with them and told them in angry words to leave the place and have their sport in that part of the tank where men used to have their bath, for she said, it was not proper for boys to be prying about in places where the ladies had their bath. And when little Gadadhar asked her why it was not proper, she scolded him vehemently all the more and threatened to get him punished by reporting his behaviour to his parents. Little Gadadhar, who did not see any impropriety in the affair, came thenceforth daily for a few days to the place and watched the ladies secretly to find out the reason why he was scolded. At last the matter reached his mother's ears, who knowing beforehand

that her boy was not amenable to threats, appealed to his heart and asked him whether it was proper for him to do a thing by which she herself as well as all of her sex felt their dignity greatly humiliated, namely, to watch them while they bathed. And little Gadadhar now understood the reason and never did the thing any more.

The all-absorbing interest of Gadadhar in the ideal characters of the epics and his constant brooding and concentration on them brought about however, a most unlooked-for result, as soon as he reached his seventh year. Bengal being the richest rice producing province in India, the people of her rural villages have always fed their boys with that article of food. Besides the two meals of boiled rice during the course of the day, the boys were given fried rice and fried paddy, sometimes sweetened with molasses, at breakfast and tiffin times. And boys and girls' about the age of our little Gadadhar would often carry their simple breakfast in small wicker-baskets and eat them in the open, sitting together or walking here and there and chatting with one another. The cottage of Khudiram being on the western outskirts of the village, close to the paddy fields in that direction, Gadadhar would often eat his breakfast as he roamed about in the fields. As he was doing the same one summer

morning, he noticed the rise of a thunder-cloud in the distant horizon. It began to spread rapidly covering the blue expanse of heaven and looked so sombre in its black grandeur that the poetic sense in him became thoroughly roused by it. As if to complete the charm of the scene, just then rose a flock of cranes from the neighbouring fields and in their measured flight spread their snow-white wings as a relief against the deep dark sky, raising such a beautiful contrast that the inmost soul of the boy was thrilled with rapture. He watched and watched forgetting all about his breakfast, until at last his mind was so much absorbed in the contemplation of the beauty of the scene that he lost all consciousness for a while of all his surroundings and even of his own body ! A kind neighbour happening to walk in that direction found the boy lying in that condition by the road-side, with his breakfast strewn all around, and carried him home to his parents. He regained his consciousness, however, within a short time and when asked what ailed him at the time, he asserted strongly that it was no ailment whatsoever, only that his mind getting thrilled with a deep sense of pleasure on looking at the beautiful sight became lost somehow in the same. His parents, however, would not believe his statement and taking it to be the first appearance of some serious malady

took him to the physician's and kept him in the house for a few days to give him complete rest. But as a second attack of the kind did not come upon him soon, and he looked as strong and healthy as ever, the seriousness of the affair gradually faded away from the minds of the family, and he was permitted ere long to go to the school and do everything else as he had been doing before.

The seventh year, however, had in store a deep sorrow for our little Gadadhar. For his father Khudiram, whose health had been failing rapidly of late, died while he was on a visit to his sister's place at Salempur on account of the Durgapuja festival, celebrated annually with great eclat by the family. His eldest son, Ramkumar, and his sister's son, Ramchand, for whom he had always the most genuine affection, were by his side at the time and the last words that he ever uttered were a deep and devoted call on his tutelary Deity Raghavir, to whose hands he commended himself before the supreme moment came. Khudiram died in 1843 A. D., when he was sixty-eight years old.

The sensitive nature of Gadadhar was deeply affected by the incident of his father's death. For, he had already begun to appreciate the greatness of his father's character by comparing it with that of others in his own way even at this early age. It is

natural, therefore, that the great void created in his heart by the event, made him think as deeply as he could at the time, on the problem of life and death. His fondness for frequenting solitary places increased and he passed many an hour in the lonely fields and on the cremation-ground by the side of the little rivulet close to his place, (known to this day as the 'Bhutir Khal' or the canal of the departed spirits), and in the adjacent mango-grove planted by the Raja Manick. He felt himself drawn besides more than ever to the study of religious literature, for therein, he found the teaching about the transitory nature of human life, a truth which had come home to him with such force quite recently. And we can well imagine how he used to spend many hours of the day in studying them by himself or in company with his mother to soothe her aching heart—for, child as he still was, he could yet find that life had lost all its former sweetness for his dear mother on account of the sad event.

Strange as it may appear to us, the boy came to have at this time a great fascination for the life of those who had renounced the world. He began to frequent the *Dharmasala* or the shelter erected for the use of the pilgrims and poor wayfarers, by the Zamindar of the village, and cultivate the acquaintance of the itinerant monks who used to

rest here for a few days on their way to and from the pilgrimage of Puri or Jagannath. It so happened that a band of such monks stopped here for some weeks at the time, on account of the illness of some of their members, and Gadadhar found his opportunity. He tried to gain their hearts by doing little things for them, and bringing them presents of some articles of food at times from his own family. The Sadhus, greatly pleased with the kindness and devotion of the boy, told him many a story of their travels in return, and taught him the ways of meditation and also how to lead the higher life sanctioned by the Scriptures. The child became gradually so fond of them that he began to spend all his leisure hours in their company, watching them as they performed their daily worship or cooked their simple meal to offer to the Deity or sat in meditation before the sacred fire at nightfall, or chanted hymns in praise of the Lord. The story runs in the family that his fondness for them increased so much that he dressed himself one day like them and came to his mother to show her how well he looked in that garb. The mother pleased at first with this strange fancy of her boy, grew anxious afterwards on his account. For was not the belief current in the village, that the wandering monks often swelled their ranks by enticing away youths and sometimes

boys also of his age ? Little Gadadhar tried to persuade her to give up such ideas by telling her that the Sadhus were god-fearing holy men and could never do such mean things. But the mother's heart of Chandra knew no rest from that day until the time came when the Sadhus left the village for good after blessing her boy.

The monotonous round of life in the village used to be broken many a time during the year by religious festivals, celebrating the anniversaries of various village-gods. In March, for instance, there was the celebration of the anniversary of *Shiva*, known as the *Charaka-Puja* ; in May or June, the chanting of the name of *Hari* or *Vishnu* continually for three successive days and nights,—called the *Chabbisha Prahara* ; in July, there was the car-festival—also of *Vishnu*. Then there were days for worshipping the Goddess *Manasa*, the God *Dharma*, and also *Lakshmi*, the goddess of wealth, by placing her on a heap of newly grown paddy, fresh from the fields at about the hour of dusk,—for did not the paddy-fields form the principal source of income to the people of the place ? Besides, there was the national religious festival of India celebrated with special eclat everywhere in Bengal, namely, the worship of the Divine Mother *Durga*. Thus the village appeared brisk and cheerful

on many a little occasion. Each one of those celebrations had its own speciality, with certain characteristics again which were common to them all. Athletics and staff-playing, for instance, formed an invariable part of the *Shiva*-festival of *Charaka Puja*, as the special feature ; the observance of a tender regard for all living creatures formed part of every *Vishnu*-festival; although the performance of religious dramas in the open and without the help of a stage and its paraphernalia—called the *yatras*—was held alike in both kinds of festivities. The sensitive, devotional nature of Gadadhar felt a special thrill during all those festive occasions, but the feature in them all which delighted him the most was the musical performances or *yatras*. His study of the religious literature gave him a special aptitude to understand them and the poet and musician in him found himself transported for the time into the dreamland of unspeakable beauty, harmony and ecstasy. A proper recognition of the bright and the dark passions that controlled human life and its fitful events, thus came to Gadadhar early in life through the help of these musical performances, but his intense imagination combined with his constant brooding over such things brought forth an unforeseen development in his mind of which we shall speak presently.

Little over a mile to the north of Kamarpukur, there stands the little sanctuary of the Goddess *Vishalakshi*, (literally, one with large eyes) in the village of Anur. The name of the Goddess has been held in deep veneration in the villages around from very old times. And the simple village folks flocked to her for help, to get themselves free from incurable diseases, as well as for the fulfilment of their heart's desire in many little things. The number of women votaries, of course, had always been greater than that of men, and as these villages of rural Bengal had never been subjected to the strict rules of *Purdah*, women of every rank could be seen to travel alone or in company with others of their sex, to the place from a distance of even ten miles or more.

Gadadhar who was eight years old by this time, had one day joined such a party of worshippers, going to visit the sanctuary. The party was made up mostly of ladies whom he knew ; and Prasanna, the widowed daughter of the Zemindar of Kamarpukur, who was very fond of him, was also one of it. So the boy felt quite at home and entertained them with songs of the Divine Mother and with reciting stories from the Puranas at their request. Thus each one of the little party felt a great fervour of religious enthusiasm as they wended their way cheerfully through the lonely fields.

But an unexpected turn of events filled their hearts with fear and anxiety as they neared their destination. For Gadadhar suddenly lost all outward consciousness and fell into a deep trance. The ladies, who had never experienced such a thing before, took his case for a sunstroke, and some ran to the neighbouring pond for water and others began to fan him after placing him under the cool shade of a tree. But they were all surprised to find that the boy's face was radiant with a heavenly smile, and the calm dignity and self-possession of it inspired awe in their simple hearts! Then the suggestion came from one amongst them, might it not be that the Divine Mother whom they were going to worship, had deigned to manifest herself in Her inscrutable ways, through the pure body and mind of Gadadhar to bless them all? Else why did the boy instead of looking miserable seem thus to be full of ecstasy, appearing quite like one possessed by a supernatural being?

Thoughts like these, though they might be held up to ridicule by the iconoclastic agnosticism of the present day, appeared like self-evident truths to the modest and faithful hearts of the country-women. They sat round the boy and began to chant the name of the Mother with deep devotion.

And before they had proceeded long in this way, Gadadhar came to his ordinary senses again. The delighted ladies then asked the boy what had made him so strange, he replied that he hardly knew anything, but it seemed to him as if his mind suddenly getting concentrated on the thought of the beauty of the Divine Mother, while he was chanting Her name, lost all its outer bearings, and its movements became finally confined to an indescribable vision of beauty and delight. And strange as it may appear to us, Gadadhar did not feel any physical weakness after the experience and was able to go to the sanctuary, and returned home with the ladies as if nothing had happened !

And now came the time when Gadadhar must undergo the ceremony necessary to put on the sacred thread, so that he might be initiated into the study of the Vedas as far as possible, and above all that he might worship and realise the Supreme Being in himself and the universe, by entering into the spirit of the central mystery contained in them. The occasion is looked upon among the Hindus as a memorable one from time immemorial ; for has not the noviciate to bind himself on that day to give up forever the life in the flesh and live for purity, light and truth alone in accordance with the principles laid down in the

Vedas? And has he not to promise to be truthful in thought, word and deed, abstemious in his habits, obedient and faithful to his teacher and to live the life of plain living and high thinking from that day? Thus it is looked upon as the occasion in which the boy has to undergo a new birth in a higher plane of existence, and so the term *Dvija* or the twice-born is applied to the class who receive the initiation. And as a part of it, is also prevalent the custom that an elderly woman of equal rank to the mother of the boy should have the privilege of looking after his simple wants from the day of his entrance into the higher life by pouring the first dole of rice as alms into his newly-acquired 'begging-bowl.'*

Now the daughter of the blacksmith, Dhani, who had long been a great friend of the family and who indeed had been the nurse of Gadadhar since the day he was born, when she heard that her sweet little protege was going to have the sacred thread of the twice-born, yearned in her heart to have the privilege of giving him the first dole of alms on the occasion. She knew it well that she would not be supported in this by the custom of the family; yet fondly as she loved the boy, she could not give up the idea and her heart became heavy with grief.

*Lit. Begging sack.

The quick perception of Gadadhar who was no less fond of this poor woman, soon found out the cause of her sorrow and he determined to make her happy by fulfilling her desire. The story runs in the family how in spite of stern protests from his elders he remained so firm in his purpose that they had ultimately to change their mind and allow poor Dhani to give him the first dole of alms on the occasion, and that this occurred while the boy was only nine years old.

Gadadhar was now allowed the privilege of worshipping and serving the family deity Raghuvira and he did so with great eagerness. For he had long been familiar with the accounts of the wonderful way in which his father found the image in a dream, of how the family had been blessed since in every way, and how his parents had often had the good fortune to be favoured with super-sensuous visions and perceptions through serving the God. No wonder then that he proceeded to his new task with all the ardour and devotion that his nature was able to summon to the occasion with the sure expectation that he also would be favoured ere long with such visions and experiences. This does not mean, however, that he began to lead a visionary life from this time forward. He went to the school, led his playmates in everything that

they all did, pursued his studies of the sacred literature, practised the arts of painting and clay-modelling at leisure and did everything as he used to do before. But in the hours that he spent in worshipping the image, his strong imagination combined with his natural power of concentrating his mind made him rise to such heights of meditation that he lost consciousness of all his surroundings and his unfettered and untrammelled mind lived and moved for the time with the living ideal which the image always stood for. And ere many months had passed, his mind became accustomed to soar to those higher regions of peace and silence which the worldly-minded dread to enter in their dreams even, and began to see light where they would only see "darkness piled upon darkness" with the help of their poor imagination. The events which followed go to prove what has been stated above.

The ceremony of investiture with the Sacred Thread being over, there came a great change, as we have hinted above, in the inner life of the boy, Gadadhar, with the quickening of a new impulse and a new aspiration for the destiny he was born to fulfil. An incident which soon occurred after that sacred ceremony drew the attention of the rural mind of the village towards the spiritual potency of the boy. Once in connection with the

performance of some obsequies, there was summoned a great assembly of learned *Pandits* in the house of the *Zemindar* of the village, Laha Babu; and as usual there arose a hot discussion among the scholars on a certain religious point. None of them could come to any definite conclusion, in spite of much scholarly disputations and wranglings. Just then young Gadadhar crept in and slowly suggested to one of the *Pandits* if the problem could not have been conveniently solved in a particular way. The learned scholar was taken by surprise to hear such a wonderful solution of that much disputed question, and that too coming from a young boy of nine years old; and the *Pandit's* surprise was shared by the whole assembly when they came to know of it, so much so, that some of them being over-joyed at this prodigious nature of the boy, took him up into their lap and caressed him. This incident made Gadadhar rise greatly in estimation of the simple folks of his village.

In passing, we may point out here a great similarity in this incident of the Master's life to that of Jesus Christ when as a young boy he astonished even the learned Doctors of the Jewish faith by explaining before them the true import of their Scripture in the temple of Yave.

The incident that followed next was of still

greater indication of the unfoldment of his spiritual nature. It was on the holy occasion of Sivaratri when Gadādhara came to experience the Divine communion and God-vision in Samadhi for the third time, and it came about in the following way : As it is usual with the devout Hindus to fast on that day and spend the whole time, specially the night, in the worship of the Great God Mahadeva, young Gadadhar with all the zeal of a novice determined to observe the day in fast and vigil. He thought he would spend the whole night in worship and constant communion through meditation on the Lord. But it so happened that in a house of a particular rich neighbour * of his, there was to be the performance of a country drama, the *yatra*, of some piece referring to the greatness of the Lord Siva. The drama was arranged in order to help the devotees of the village to keep vigil and pass the night cheerfully in thought of the great God. But as chance would have it, there arose difficulties in doing the performance, at the eleventh hour. The person who was to take the part of Siva fell ill all on a sudden, and the proprietor finding no other proper substitute thought of giving up the performance altogether. And the news was very

* Mr. Sitanath Pain was a friend of the father of young Gadadhar's friend Gangavishnu Laha.

disheartening to the expectant villagers. The elders held a council how to make the performance possible. While they were discussing about it, it was suggested by some of the younger folks, that 'Gadai' could act the part very well and there was none in the village who could do it better. So it was decided at once that Gadadhar should be summoned for the purpose. And it was not very long before the decision was carried into practice. A number of young boys, friends of Gadadhar, eagerly ran to his house and pressed him to take part in the performance. It was the fore-part of the night and Gadadhar had just finished the first *Prahara* worship and was sitting in meditation. When the matter was told to him, at first he refused to stir out of his worship room that night, but subsequently he had to yield to the importunities of his friends and came to the place of drama. He was taken to the green-room and some of his play-mates took great delight in dressing him up as Siva. But the idea of impersonation as suggested by his dress of long-matted locks, tiger skin, the *Rudraksha* bead and the holy ashes, stirred up such a deep emotion in his heart and turned his mind so profoundly towards the real Siva, that when his turn came to appear, he could only move out with great difficulty. And next, when the proprietor began to chant the

prayer to Siva before him, he lost all consciousness of his surroundings and stood like a statue. The only visible sign of life in him was the trickling down of devotional tears from his eyes. At first it was taken by the audience as part of his acting and so he received a shower of applause from them for its naturalness. But subsequently, when some minutes passed away and he did not speak or move, they grew impatient and one or two of the elders came near, only to find him perfectly unconscious. They thought he had swooned and so tried some means to bring him back to consciousness again, but to no avail. His trance could not be broken. Therefore at last they had to stop the performance for that night and Gadadhar was carried in that state to his house. We have heard that the trance lasted for the whole night in spite of all anxieties and efforts of his relations to break it. Some say that it continued even for three days.

After this incident, this kind of trance began to occur often. During the time of worship, or when engaged in meditation, or when listening to some devotional songs relating to the glories of gods and goddesses, he would often feel his mind sucked in as it were, and lose for some time all external consciousness in the thought of God. At times the

trance used to be so deep that his body became perfectly inert like a corpse. When enquired how he felt during those unconscious states, he used to say that he beheld some divine visions and his mind was absorbed in the very bliss of them. His mother and other relations became very much concerned at this; but after some time when they found that those trances were not telling upon the health of the boy in any way, on the other hand he was feeling ever more cheerful and buoyant, the anxiety slowly waned away from their minds. Moreover, by constant occurrence of this state, the boy got used to it and it became almost optional to him. Besides, during those trances Gadadhar perceived many new truths about gods and goddesses, which gave him immense joy at heart and made him always look forward for such states, instead of being afraid of them.

As a natural consequence of these trances, a great religious change came over the boy, his spiritual fervour getting whetted by the visit of each of these moods; and henceforth he began to join whole-heartedly all the different religious ceremonies in connection with the various tutelary deities of the village. And his inborn catholicity wedded with the higher spiritual impulses born of those God-visions, made him look upon all the

different gods and goddesses of the village with equanimity and profound devotion which contained the seed of the glorious realisation of harmony of religions of his after-life. Further, the customs of the village might have had some effect upon his nature in this matter. Unlike other places, here in Kamarpukur, bitter sectarianism could never make any inroad upon the rural minds, the people although nominally belonging to different sects, used to have most cordial feelings towards each other, holding each other's religious scruples and ideals with equal reverence. And this fact is noticeable there even to-day.

But although the religious nature of Gadadhar was developing in such an uncommon way through these events, his education did not keep pace with it. Having seen the narrow worldly ways and mean mundane attachment of the learned scholars of his place, possibly the boy began to foster a kind of apathy in his mind towards such knowledge as those scholars possessed. For, henceforth, the keen insight of the boy made him search for the motive of every action of others. Having kept his father's wonderful spirit of renunciation, devoutness, truthfulness and high character as the standard before him, he would naturally proceed to judge the value of the conduct of these scholars, and find

them greatly wanting. Nay, more, he probably found out thus the motives and ideals of all persons around him quite divergent from what he considered the true. Further, he must have noticed how the people having taken this unreal world as the only reality to be hugged, roll in innumerable miseries of life, and ah, the pitiable sight of it !—all these considerations might have made him determined to cut out quite a different course for his life. Perhaps my readers would think that I am presuming too much for young Gadadhar ; that for a boy of eleven or twelve years of age, it is not possible to have so much of keen insight and power of judgment as to come to such a lofty decision. But we must remember that although it might be impossible for an ordinary young boy of that age, yet for Gadadhar it was so possible, as he was born with extraordinary intellect and mental powers, his later life has shown to the world in unmistakable terms his uncommon prodigious nature. Therefore, it was not unlikely for him to have harboured such ideas even in that young age. So, however absurd it might appear to us now, for the sake of truth we must record all that we have come to know of this wonderful life after judicious enquiry.

However, though Gadadhar never felt within himself any keen thirst for such education, yet he was

regularly attending his school as before and acquired some efficiency in reading and writing his own mother-tongue. He developed a particular liking, as has been already mentioned, for the study of religious books like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata ; and when he would read these books, his devout melodious tone used to weave a charm upon his hearers. The ignorant village folks used to express their eager desire to hear the recitation of these sacred books from his mouth ; and kind-hearted Gadadhar was ever ready to acquiesce to their requests. In this way, his co-villagers like Sitanath Pain, Madhu Yugi and others used to invite him often to their own respective houses and hear him read in an assembly of both sexes, these scriptures with great devotion and rapture.

But Gadadhar made very poor progress in other subjects of his study. For instance, in mathematics, for which all along he had not much partiality, he scarcely advanced beyond simple fractions and simple rule of three of Arithmetic. After his tenth year, when his spiritual development brought forth those involuntary super-conscious trances, his relatives mistook them for ordinary fits, and being much concerned about his health they would not insist upon his going to the village school regularly, and used to give perfect

freedom to the boy as regards the manners of his study. The teacher also was not very strict with Gadadhar. So it happened that his study assumed a slackened pace that time.

Thus a couple of years passed away and Gadadhar attained his twelfth year of age. His second elder brother Rameswara and his sister Sarvamangala reached their twenty-second and ninth years respectively. And so Ramkumar, having seen them attain the marriageable age, married his second brother to the sister of Srijukta Ramsadaya Banerjee of the village, Gourhati, and Sarvamangala to Ramsadaya himself. Thus contracting the two reciprocal marital alliances, Ramkumar saved the family from the dire consequences of the dowry system.

Besides these marriages, there happened another incident in the family to break the even tenour of their life. In spite of age, Ramkumar's wife had had no issue, which had made every body think her barren. But now she was in the family way. The news roused a mixed feeling of joy and fear in the minds of the family members, because it was predicted by Ramkumar himself that his wife would not survive the birth of her child. But however, from that time forward there came a great change in the fortune of Ramkumar.

All those avenues of earning his livelihood which were once so gay and fruitful, became now dark and shady. His health too began to fail him. His profession suffered much curtailment. His wife also began to evince strange conduct. It was customary in the family from the good old time of his father that excepting the young children and the diseased, no one could take anything before the worship of the family god Raghuvira. But his wife began to violate this honoured custom which produced a good deal of apprehension in his mind as a foreboding of the sad event. Moreover, she became very peevish and quarrelsome which caused much disturbance of the peace of the household. She paid no heed nor showed any respect even to the words of her husband and mother-in-law. But they all put up with her strange conduct thinking of her *enceinte* condition.

Though Rameswar, the second brother, had enough education by this time, yet he could not earn anything to help the family. Thus in spite of the gradual increment of the members of the Chatterjee household, the means of livelihood began to diminish day by day. This troubled Ramkumar not to a little extent; he strained his brain to invent various ways of earning to meet the bare

necessities of the family, but somehow or other they came to naught, as if some one was frustrating all his attempts from behind. And so Ramkumar was overwhelmed with cares and anxieties.

Thus days and months passed and the time for confinement of Ramkumar's wife approached, and with it increased also the fear of his mind in remembrance of his past vision about the danger. At last, some time in the year 1255 B. S. (1849 A. D.), she gave birth to a son and passed away shortly after, in the confinement room itself. This event robbed away all cheerfulness of the family for some time and spread a dark pall of gloom over it.

CHAPTER VIII.

In the dawn of Youth.

Ramkumar bore the bereavement of his wife patiently ; yet there was no end to his evil days. The straitened circumstances of his family threatened to crush him down under their dead weight. The little income from his priestly profession began to get attenuated day by day, and along with it grew the spectre of want overshadowing the family. The little plot of land of Lakshmijala still yielded the same quantity of paddy, yet there were thousand other needs of the family, besides the few morsels of food, to meet. Besides, his little motherless child Akshoya had to be nursed and its little wants to be looked after. So, he had to meet all these imperative demands of the family even by running into debt. And debts began to grow evermore as days rolled on. All efforts of Ramkumar to thwart its calamitous onset were of no avail. His friends and relations advised him then that his prospect might be brightened if he would go elsewhere.

His smitten heart also took up the suggestion with all eagerness. For, nearly thirty years he had passed his sunny days in that house with one whose memory now appeared to be lingering, like the soft after-glow of the parted sun, on everything that he beheld around him. So he thought, peace of mind rested for him only on his being away from such surroundings. But which place would be more profitable for him to go, Burdwan or Calcutta, he discussed. At last it was settled to go to the latter place. His friends told him that many of his co-villagers had improved their fortune by going to the metropolis. They further hinted at the fact that a man of his attainment would surely succeed by going there, where even men of lesser ability could build up their fortune immensely. So, a short while after his wife's death, Ramkumar having entrusted his family affairs to his brother Rameswar, came to Calcutta and opened a *toll* at Jhamapookoor. A large number of students began to flock round him to get instructions in the different branches of the Sanskrit study.

Thus the death of Ramkumar's wife brought in its wake a great change in the Chatterjee family of Kamarpukur. The old mother, Chandra Devi, was compelled once again to undertake all the duty of a housewife ; the task of nursing the young

babe of Ramkumar also fell upon her. Though there was the wife of Rameswar to help her in the household work, yet she was too young to be of much aid. The worship of the tutelary deity Raghuvira, the nursing of Akshoy, the duties of the kitchen,—all these kept her fully engaged for the whole of the day without giving a moment's respite or rest. Though it was neither easy nor comfortable for her to bear the heavy burden of such household duties at this fifty eighth year of her age,* yet with humble resignation she bore them all, taking it to be the will of the Lord, Raghuvira.

In his turn, Rameswar now being saddled with the responsibility of looking after the pecuniary affairs of the family, busied himself in trying to make at least both ends meet. But, although he was learned, he could not earn much. Moreover, he was no exception to the general devout nature of the family ; so whenever he happened to meet any religious person, he used to devote not only hours and days in his company, but his slender purse also to remove any want of the *sadhu*. Thus it was not possible for him either to earn much for, or pay off the debts of, the family. He was in the

* Srimati Chandra Devi was born in the year 1197 and died in 1282 B. S. at the 85th year of her age.

world as a householder, yet he was incapable of conserving or husbanding his resources ; on many an occasion he would outstrip his means.

Neither he could afford to pay much attention to the education of Gadadhar. In spite of his great love for his youngest brother, he had never bestowed any attention to his study, partly owing to the fact that his eldest brother was hitherto looking after all these details of the family life, and partly perhaps because it was not after his temperament. But now, as much of his time was taken away in earning his livelihood, his want of time deepened his temperamental indifference into positive neglect in the matter. Moreover, having noticed the religious tendencies of the boy and good graces of his head and heart which had endeared him to all, he must have fondly concluded that such a boy could not go wrong, that his native propensities would never take him astray. So it happened that after Ramkumar's departure to Calcutta, Gadadhar, when reached his thirteenth year, became like one without a guardian, and followed freely wherever and howsoever his native inclinations directed him.

We have already said that the keen insight of Gadadhar did not fail to detect the hidden motive behind every action of the worldly persons.

Therefore it was quite patent to him that the kind of knowledge, the ordinary scholars seek in schools and colleges is not meant to illumine the heart or elevate their character, but only to gain some position and honour in the society, as well as to pave the way for worldly prosperity. Again, he must have noticed, though young as he was, that these very persons dowered with fortune and fame could at best lead a life of luxury, but failed to attain that devotion to truth, that strength of character and glory of piety, which he had beheld in his own revered father. Further, his natural instinct must have revealed to him in all its bareness the utter impermanency of this worldly life. Had he not seen, as he used to tell of these in his later life, how two brothers forgetting all their ties of blood and drowning their natural affection in the pool of selfishness, would come forward with a tape in hand to divide and demarcate their ancestral field and say, 'this side is mine' and 'that side is yours'? And the very same brothers would not be spared many years of life to enjoy their properties which they had seized with so heartless selfishness. Therefore it was but natural for such a boy to grow indifferent towards such "bread and butter winning education," and seek the contentment of the soul and grace of the Deity, taking them, like his father, as the highest goal of life.

Hence, from that time forward though he used to go to his school now and then—that too more for the company of his friends than for study,—yet most of his time, he began to spend in the worship of his family God, Raghuvira, and in helping his mother in the household work.

Thus Gadadhar was compelled to stay at home for a longer time in the day than before. And the ladies of the neighbourhood who would come to his mother in the noon to have a friendly chat, would often seize the opportunity of making Gadadhar sing them some devotional songs or read out some religious book or recite some hymns. The more he would comply to their requests, the more would they urge him to do the same—so fascinating were his manners and voice; so much so, that such singings and recitals came to be counted among his daily duties. Besides, seeing the eagerness of the ladies he would even act out some of the dramas which he might have learnt from the professionals of the place or sing *samkirtans* or devotional *boul* songs. While enacting the different parts of a particular drama he would himself impersonate the different characters and speak in different tones befitting the respective characters that would cause a roar of laughter among his audience of the fair sex. Sometimes he would amuse them by acting

the burlesque of a farce or in imitating the ludicrous manners of some known persons of the village. Thus the boy Gadadhar won the affections of these ladies and exerted a peculiar influence over them. It was quite probable that they might have heard all the stories of divine visions and experiences in relation to his birth; and more, they themselves witnessed the extraordinary spiritual trances that little Gadai fell into whenever there was an occasion to stir his religious emotions; and his burning God-devotion, his all-exclusive absorption in the reading of the scriptures, his silvery voice, peeling out songs in ecstatic joy in the praise of the Lord,—all these must have touched their soft hearts and evoked in them a feeling of love and reverence for the boy. We have heard that Prasannamayi, the daughter of the local Zemindar, and other elderly women of the neighbourhood used to love him dearly as their own son taking him to be the manifestation of Bala Gopal. Others of a more tender age feeling a peculiar attraction towards him used to look upon him as a dear friend and felt the charm of *Sakhya bhava*. Most of these women were *Vaishnava* by faith and their poetic instinct, fostered by the Vaishnava traditional culture, would naturally prompt them to look upon this fair looking boy, with all his charming manners, as something

divine and adorable. And the more such feelings deepened into their heart, the more did they seek his company, and even his counsels in their respective private matters. Moreover, at that time, his manners and behaviour were so truly feminine that the women at times would forget that he was of the sterner sex and confide all their secrets to him and treat him as one belonging to their own sex.

Being prompted by his innate *Prakriti bhava*, he told us afterwards, there arose a desire in his mind: He heard that the Gopis (the Shepherd girls of Brindavan) attained Lord Sri Krishna as their husband through intense *prema*, and it was possible only because they had the woman's body, and he thought, that he too could have been blessed with the same rare divine privilege through his intense God-love, had he been a woman. Thus he considered his male body as a great obstacle in his way to realising God through *Madhura bhava*. He mused that if he were to be born again he would be born as a girl and incarnate in a Brahmin's house with beautiful appearance and long hairs. She would become a virgin widow, and would not look upon any one save Lord Sri Krishna as her husband. There would be a little plot of land around her little hut and a small means of subsistence also. There would be an old woman only as her guardian and none else

to keep company. In that little plot of land she would grow with her own hands, some vegetables and there would be also a cow which she would milk herself. Further, she would have a spinning wheel too. And the fancy of the boy would stretch further to imagine that after the day's work she would sit in the verandah of the hut and while spinning the wheel, she would sing in praise of Lord Sri Krishna. And when the sombre shadow of evening would descend on earth, she would take the butter and sweets prepared from the cow's milk and would cry her heart out for Sri Krishna, feel the bitterest pang of separation from the Lord and pray with the deepest emotion of heart to Him to come and accept her offerings. And lo ! Sri Krishna in the form of a beautiful cowherd boy would slowly creep in and would accept her offerings of devotion. And thus he would be coming to her everyday without being noticed by anybody and she would enjoy the divine company of the Lord. Though this dream of Gadadhar was not literally fulfilled, yet materialised in another form in his after life which we shall see when we come to the Sadhana period of his life.

In pursuance of this kind of proclivities of his mind, at times, he would actually dress himself as a woman and play the parts of women characters

of a drama. Specially when he would enact the parts of Radha or any of her famous *sakhis*, the ladies would often request him to put on the dress of a woman. And his imitations of the womanly manners used to be perfect. From this we can understand how minutely the boy used to observe the manners and behaviours of women. Sometimes in fun he would dress himself as a village lass and go to the neighbouring pond called Hal-darpukur to fetch water with a pitcher on his loins just after the women of the place. And no one could recognise him in that garb.

In this connection we may relate here a funny incident that took place at that time. We have already mentioned the name of a rich gentleman of the village, Sitanath Payin. His house was very near to that of Gadadhar. And there were a number of other prosperous houses belonging to men of the same Vanik caste of Sitanath. So the whole of that quarter of the village was known as *Vanik Palli*. And many women of these Vanik families were friends of Chandra Devi and used to frequent her house and hold leisurely conversations. It was they who grew into admirers of Gadadhar in the afore-said manner. These women sometimes used to invite Gadadhar to their own respective houses and request him to enact some drama or sing some

devotional songs ; specially the ladies of Sitanath's house used to love him much and invite him to their house often. Sitanath Payin himself had a very great partiality for Gadadhar. Thus almost all the Vanik houses of the place had a free access to Gadadhar. Only one family behaved otherwise. It was the house of the rich merchant Durgadas Payin. Though he had much liking and respect for young Gadadhar, yet he did not like to loosen the *purdah* custom of his family on any account. He prided himself over the fact that no one could know anything of the inner apartments of his house, nor see the female members of his family. Moreover, he used to decry such persons like Sitanath who would not observe the *purdah* custom rigidly.

One day Durgadas was bragging himself of the rigidity of his *Purdah* system and Gadadhar was present there. Having heard the vaunting of the man, the young boy, calmly interposed, " Women cannot be saved merely by the *Purdah* system. Their best protection is only in their good education and God-devotion. If I like I can see everything and know everything of the inner apartments of your house." But Durgadas growled with a touch of vanity, " Well, let me see how you can." " Well, you shall see," so replying Gadadhar came away from him that day. Afterwards one day

without anybody's knowledge, the boy wore a dusky cloth and silver bangles after the fashion of a weaver woman, took a small basket in his arm, covered his face with a veil and went to the house of Durgadas from the side of the village market just at sunset. At that time Durgadas was sitting with his friends in the outer apartment. And Gadadhar in that disguise went straight to him and told that he was a weaver woman, belonging to another village and came in the morning to sell her thread in the market. But now she found all her companions gone away deserting her. She had been put thereby into a great fix and would be much obliged if he could give her a shelter in his house for the night. Durgadas without being able to recognise him in this disguise and taking him to be really a weaver woman put a few questions about the village the latter came from, and then told him to go in and ask for shelter from the ladies. Gadadhar thanked him for the kindness shown and entered the inner apartment. There too he said the same story to the ladies and created much sympathy in their mind by various pleasant talks. Seeing the tender age of the weaver woman and being much pleased at her sweet conversations, the ladies of the house gave her their permission to stay for the night, and having

shown a place for her nightly rest served her some repast. Gadadhar sat there and while doing justice to the little food given to him, he began to observe minutely all female members of the house and scan their manners with great scrutiny. He never missed a word of their conversation, and at times himself also joined in their talk by dropping in a question here and an answer there. In this wise two or three hours passed. And in his own house his mother not finding him return till so late an hour in the evening, sent his second brother Rameswar in search of him. As he often used to go to the Vanik quarter she asked him to search him there. Rameswar first went to Sitanath's house and not finding him there began to pass by the side of Durgadas's house while loudly shouting out his name. Gadadhar having heard his voice from inside, bawled out in answer, even from that inner apartment of Durgadas's house, that he was coming, and ran out of the house. Then Durgadas came to know everything of the boy's trick and though at first he was much offended to see himself and his family thus deceived by the pranks of a boy, yet he could not fail to admire the naturalness of Gadadhar's disguise. Next day when Sitanath and other neighbours of Durgadas came to know of the incident, they were very much pleased

and congratulated Gadadhar on his success in defeating the pride of Durgadas. This incident so deeply impressed the ladies of Durgadas's house in favour of Gadadhar that thenceforward they also used to appear before the boy whenever he happened to go to Vanikpalli and enjoy his performances and songs.

Thus, we find, Gadadhar attracted the affection and esteem of all the ladies of the neighbourhood. We have heard that sometimes he used to get spiritual trances while reading the scriptures or singing devotional songs in the house of Sitanath Payin, and at those times the ladies of the family used to worship him with devotional offerings, taking them to be God's manifestation in the boy.

Now and then, we had occasions to hear of this superb influence that young Gadadhar wielded over the heart of the ladies of his place. In the beginning of 1299 of the Bengal era, Swami Ramakrishnananda and some of us went on pilgrimage to Kamarpukur and there we were fortunate enough to meet Srimati Rukmini, one of the daughters of Sitanath Payin. At that time her age was about sixty years, and we recount below what she told us personally about the influence young Gadadhar had over them. She related, "Our house is a little away from this place to the north, almost within a visible

distance. At present it is in a great dilapidated condition owing to our poor circumstances, but when I was seventeen or eighteen years of age, my father's family was in great prosperity. My father was Sitanath Payin and his was a big joint-family. Including all my cousins and sisters we were nearly eighteen young girls in the house, all of them almost of the same age, just emerging from adolescence into prime of youth. Gadadhar was our playmate from the very time of our infancy. So, he was our great 'chum.' And even when we attained age he often used to come to our house and had free access even to our inner apartments. My father had a great love and veneration for him and used to look upon him as an emblem of his Deity. If some of his friends remarked how he could allow Gadadhar to enter into his inner apartments when he had a number of young girls in his house, my father used to reply "Well, there is no fear of that. You may rest in peace. I know Gadadhar very well," and that would silence them. Gadadhar used to relate to us stories and anecdotes from the Puranas and other scriptures, and amuse us with his usual witticisms. Almost every day we heard such things from him and that used to give us good cheer in performing our house-hold duties. As long

as he used to be near us, we never knew how time flew, so joyous an absorption did he bring upon us by his charming conversation. If it happened any day that he did not turn up, we used to feel much anxiety about him, thinking that some illness might have prevented his coming. And our heart knew no peace or contentment until some of us went out of our house under the plea of fetching water or some other business and bring the news about him. Every word of his appeared to us as imbued with nectar. Therefore the day he did not come to our house, we missed him very much and used to pass it in conversation about him only."

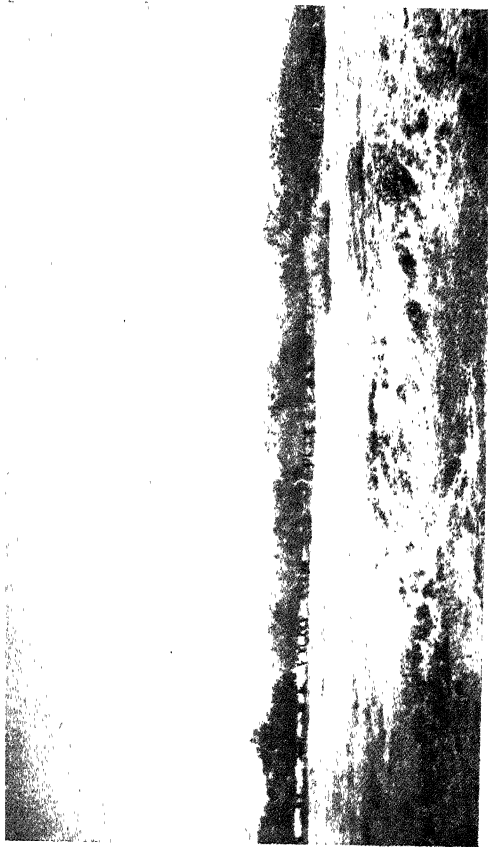
His empire of influence was not confined within the narrow bounds of the inner apartments of ladies only. But his versatile prodigious nature, his sympathetic affability and loving heart used to attract to him even men of all grades and ages. All those places where young and old folks of the village used to congregate every evening to hear the recitals of holy scriptures or singing of some devotional songs, he often used to attend. And whenever he was present on such occasions, he used to infuse a new spirit and inspiration into the performances, and all present felt wonderful joy which they did not feel otherwise. For, very few

were there who could read or explain the passages of Scriptures with such intense devotion and fervour, or could sing with such melodious voice and dance the ecstatic dance. And again in mother-wit few surpassed him,—his comic acting, and burlesque used to amuse his audience as no one could. So, all persons were very much attracted towards him and used to look forward to his coming to such places in the evenings. Gadadhar also always used to frequent these resorts of rural devotion and amusement.

Even in that young age seeing his wonderful precocity of intelligence and keenness of insight, many elderly persons used to take advice from him about their household matters; pious men seeing his spiritual trances and fervour of devotion would seek his opinion about their respective spiritual culture. We hear, a few persons like Srinivasa Sankhari and others of his village looked upon Gadadhar even from that time as their spiritual guide. Such was the universal love and regard that young Gadadhar commanded among his co-villagers. Only the hypocrites and the wicked had no liking for him. Perhaps it was so, because the keen penetration of the intelligence of the boy could easily pierce through their garb of falsity and detect their ugly nature and wicked motives,

and his truthful brave heart would not spare them from exposing their real colour before every one. No, that was not all, sometimes he used to hold them up to ridicule by caricaturing their false ways before others. These used to put them to shame and scorn of their compatriots. And so, no doubt, it generated a great bitterness of feeling in their heart against Gadadhar, but they were too afraid to do any injury to the boy owing to his extraordinary popularity.

It has already been mentioned that Gadadhar having realised well within himself the fruitlessness of the sort of education that the ordinary schools and institutions impart, resolved that he would have nothing to do with such kind of education ; yet he kept on dropping in now and then into his *Pathasala*, and it was just for the sake of his friends. For, his playmates and fellow students like Gaya Vishnu and others used to love him very dearly and look upon him as their leader in all matters. But the heart of Gadadhar, instinct with higher emotions and aspirations, always sought an opportunity to relieve himself from any connection with the school. And now an opportunity presented itself to him to sever that connection. Having seen the wonderful dramatic capacity of Gadadhar, some of his friends



MANICK RAJA'S MANGO ORCHARD.

proposed to open a theatrical party with Gadadhar as its head and conductor. Gadadhar acceded to their request, but a great difficulty arose in the way of accomplishing this purpose of the youngsters ; they were all young boys and if their guardians would come to know anything of this matter, they were sure to be censured on that account and so, the whole affair of the party, including the rehearsals, had to be conducted in such a place which would be hidden from any possible notice of the guardians. And such a place they could not find out conveniently. There was the big mango grove called Manick Raja's mango orchard in the vicinity of the village. And Gadadhar told them that the grove would serve their purpose admirably. And at once it was settled that all the boys would scamp away from the school at a particular hour of the day and congregate there in the grove for the purpose. Within a short time under the intelligent leadership and guidance of Gadadhar, the young boys of the village banded themselves into a well-formed dramatic club and many of them attained good proficiency in enacting their respective parts. And from day to day the solitary air of the mango grove used to resound with the cheery voice and melodious songs of these youngsters. Needless to say that young Gadadhar had to take the hero's

part in every piece and had also to make up for the shortcomings of other actors by his own inventive genius. Here too, we have heard Gadadhar used to fall into the spiritual trances at times while enacting the religious dramas.

Now, this theatrical party used to take away much of his time and attention, so he had very little leisure to devote to other things. We have already said that the boy had a very great aptitude for drawing pictures. Once at about this time, he went to see his youngest sister, Sarvamangala, at her husband's place. As he entered her house he found her sitting by the side of her husband and nursing him. Subsequently after his return to his village Gadadhar drew a picture portraying the sight he saw at his sister's place. And the faithfulness of the likenesses of his sister and her husband was striking. All the family members admired the picture. For the art of clay modelling also, he had a very great aptitude, and he attained much efficiency in modelling the images of different gods and goddesses. Many a time he would make himself such images and worship them in the proper manner along with his friends.

Besides these there was another occupation for young Gadadhar and it was to give company to the young motherless baby, Akshoy. While Chandra

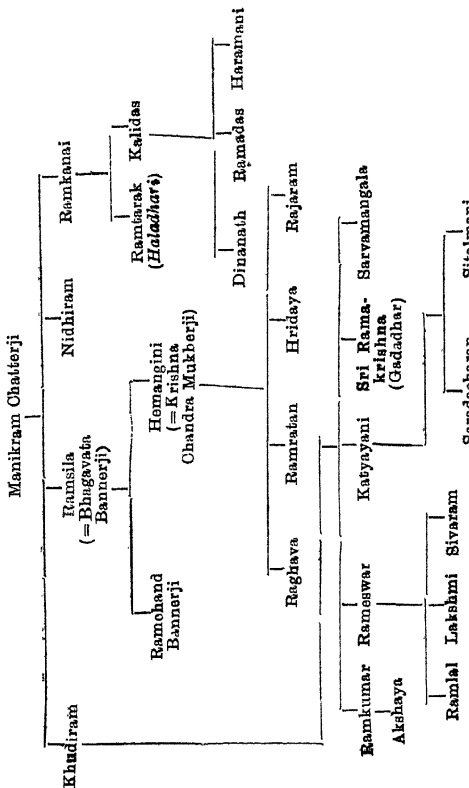
used to be engaged in the performance of household duties, Gadadhar would nurse and look after the baby or carry it about in his laps.

Thus three more years rolled away and Gadadhar reached his seventeenth year of age. In the meantime Ramkumar was labouring hard to better his fortune in Calcutta, and the number of students of his *Chatuspathi* was fairly on the increase. He usually used to come at every spring season to his village for a few days to see his mother and brothers. He must have noticed during such short visits the indifference and neglect of Gadadhar towards his study and that made him too much concerned about him. It was in the year 1262 of the Bengal era, 1856 A. D., when Ramkumar came to his village as usual to see his people, he decided to take Gadadhar with him to Calcutta and keep him there for his study. Apart from the consideration of better educational prospect of the boy, there was another purpose in the mind of Ramkumar in taking the boy to Calcutta. Along with the increase of his school work in Calcutta, there grew also many other aspects of his profession which he could not conveniently manage without detriment to the former. So he was badly in need of an assistant, and he thought Gadadhar could assist him much in the matter. Having come to this decision

he made the proposal to his youngest brother asking him to go with him to Calcutta. When Gadadhar heard that he was required to help his eldest brother whom he revered as his father, he had nothing to say against the proposal, though he had his own opinion about the sort of education his brother was going to give him at Calcutta. But he kept it within himself at that time. However, subsequently on a good auspicious day both the brothers, Ramkumar and Gadadhar, set out for Calcutta. And all the blissful currents of joy and merriment that flowed in the little village of Kamarpukur making Gadadhar as the centre came to a sudden stop thereafter. His co-villagers and friends felt a great void in their heart, and the fond mother Chandra missed him the most.

APPENDIX A.

Geneology of Sri Ramakrishna.



APPENDIX B.

A portion of the Horoscope of Sri Ramakrishna

BY NARAYANA CHANDRA JYOTIRBHUSHANA:

शुभमस्तु । शक-नरपतेरतीताबूदादयः १७९७ । १० । ९ ।
१९ । २८ । २९ । सन १२४२ साल, । एतच्छकीय-सौर-
फाल्गुनस्य षष्ठ-दिवसे, बुधवासरे, शुक्लपक्षीयद्वितीयायां तिथौ,
पूर्वभाद्रपदनक्षत्रस्य प्रथमचरणे, सिद्धयोगे, वालवकरणे, एवं
पञ्चांग संशुद्धौ रात्रि-चतुर्दशविपलाधिकैकत्रिंशदण्डसमये अयनांशो-
द्भव-शुभकुम्भलग्ने (लग्नस्फुटराश्यादिः १० । ३ । १९' । ५३" ।
२०'") शनैश्चरस्य क्षेत्रे सूर्यस्य होरायां सूर्यसुतस्य द्रेक्काने शुक्रस्य
नवांशे बृहस्पतेर्द्वादशांशे कुजस्य त्रिंशांशे एवं षड्वर्गपरिशोधिते
पूर्वभाद्रपद-नक्षत्राश्रितकुम्भराशिस्थिते चन्द्रे बुधस्य यामार्द्धे जीवस्य
दण्डे कोणस्थे गुरौ केन्द्रस्थे बुधे चन्द्रे च लग्नस्थे चन्द्रे त्रिग्रहयोगे
धर्मकर्माधिपयोः शुक्रभौमयोः तुंगस्थितयोः वर्गोत्तमस्थे लग्नाधिपे
शनौ च तुंगे पराशरमतेन तु राहुकेत्वोस्तुंगस्थयोः (यतः उक्तं
“राहोस्तु वृषभं केतोर्वृश्चिकं तुंगसगितम्” इत्यादि प्रमाणात्)
अतएव उच्चस्थे ग्रहपचके असाधारणपुण्यभाग्ययोगे शुक्लपक्षे
निशिजन्महेतोः विंशोत्तरी-दशाधिकारे जन्म एतेन बृहस्पतेर्दशायां

तथा देशभेदेन दशाधिकारनियमाच्च अष्टोत्तरीय-राहोर्दशायां अ-
शेषगुणालंकृतस्वधर्मनिष्ठ - क्षुदिरामचट्टोपाध्याय-महोदयस्य (सहस्र
मिणी-दयावती- चन्द्रमणिदेवीमहोदयायाः गर्भे) शुभः तृतीयपुत्रः
समजनि । तस्य राश्याश्रितं नाम शम्भुरामदेवशर्मा । प्रसिद्धनाम
गंदाधरचट्टोपाध्यायः । साधनासिद्धिप्राप्त-जगद्विख्यात-नाम श्रीराम-
कृष्ण परमहंसदेवमहोदयः ॥

जन्म कुडली—

वक्री बृ६	रा ३	शु २६ र २४ च २५	लं
		अ मं २२	
	वक्री श १५	के १७	

३।१९ 'होरा लं
०।४६'
वक्री अ बु २४

दिवा—२८।२८।१५
४ २४ २०
१ ५१ ४९
४६ २६ ५९
४४ किं ६

जाताहः

दिवा—२८।३१
५ २५ २१
२ ५१ ४१
४५ ४१ ४८
१६ २ ७

पराहः

चान्द्रफाल्गुनस्य शुक्लपक्षीयद्वितीया जन्मतिथिः ।

पूर्वभाद्रपदनक्षत्रमानं ६० । १९ । ० •

तस्य भोगदण्डादिः ९२ । १२ । ३१

भुक्तदण्डादिः ८ । २ । २९

जन्मकोष्ठीफलम्—

धर्मस्थानाधिपे तुंगे धर्मस्थे तुंगखेचरे ।

गुरुणा दृष्टिसंयोगे लग्नेशे धर्मसंस्थिते ।

केन्द्रस्थानगते सौम्ये गुरौ चैव तु कोणभे ।

स्थिरलग्ने यदा जन्म सम्प्रदायप्रभुः हि सः ॥

धर्मविन्माननीयस्तु पुण्यकर्मरतः सदा ।

देवमन्दिरवासी च बहुशिष्यसमन्वितः ॥

महापुरुषसंज्ञोऽयं नारायणांशसम्भवः ।

सर्वत्र जनवृज्यश्च भविष्यति न सशयः ॥

इति भृगुसहितायां सम्प्रदायप्रभुयोगः तत्फलं च ॥

Sri Ramakrishna was born in the year 1836 A.D., on the 2nd day of the bright fortnight of the month when the sun was in the Zodiac of Agnarius (*Kumbha*) (17th February), early in the morning at about 5 A.M. His birth took place when it was *Siddhi Yoga* owing to the auspicious union of *Sukla Dwitiya* with *Purvabhadrapada Nakshatra*. His natal star was *Purvabhadrapada*, (Pegasi) the

twenty-fifth lunar mansion. In his *Janmalagna*, i.e. in the Zodiac at the time of his birth, there was the conjunction of the three planets, viz., the Sun, the Moon and the Mercury (*Surya*, *Chandra* and *Budha*), and the other three planets, namely, Venus, Mars and Saturn (*Sukra*, *Mangala* and *Shani*) are in exaltation in the 12th, 10th, the 7th houses respectively. And again, according to the sage Parasara, the planets *Rahu* and *Ketu* (two other ascending nodes of the moon) also occupied the highest positions as they were in the 2nd and 8th houses respectively; Jupiter (*Brihaspati*) occupied the 3rd house and so it had a tendency towards ascendancy (*Tungavilashi*). The result of this natal arrangement of the planets is, according to the *Bhrihu Samhita*, that the man becomes the head of a religious movement, virtuous, highly honoured, always engaged in doing virtuous deeds; he lives in a temple, and gets a large following of disciples; he is called a great man by all, and is born of the spirit of Lord Narayana; he is worshipped by all.

APPENDIX C.

Chronological Table of the incidents referred to in the book.

Incidents	B.S.	A.D.
Birth of Khudiram	1181	1775
Birth of Chandra Devi	1197	1791
Marriage of Khudiram with Chandra— Khudiram was then 24 years old and Chandra only 8 years. (Chandra died in 1282 B.S. at the age of 85)	1205	1799
Birth of Ramkumar	1211	1805
Birth of Katyayani	1216	1810
Khudiram came to live at Kamarpukur ..	1220	1814
Marriages of Ramkumar and Katyayani ...	1226	1820
Khudiram's pilgrimage to Rameswaram ...	1230	1824
Birth of Rameswar	1232	1826
Khudiram's pilgrimage to Gaya—(he was then 60 years old)... ..	1241	1835
Birth of Sri Ramakrishna.—		
(6th <i>Phalgunā</i> , i.e., the month of <i>Kumbha</i> , <i>Shukla Paksha</i> , <i>Purvābhadrapada Nak-</i> <i>shatra</i> , <i>Dvītiya Tithi</i> , 17th February, Wed- nesday, early in the morning)	1242	1836
Birth of Sarvamangala	1245	1839
Death of Khudiram at the age of 68 years, then Sri Ramakrishna was 7 years old ..	1249	1843
Marriages of Rameswar and Sarbamangala..	1254	1848
Birth of Ramkumar's son, Akshaya, and the death of his wife. Then Ramkumar was 44 years old	1255	1849
Ramkumar came to Calcutta and opened the <i>tol</i>	1256	1850
Sri Ramakrishna came to Calcutta and began to live at the Jhamapukur Chatuspathi ..	1259	1853

